

S E R M O N S,

ALEXANDER GERARD, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, ABERDEEN

S E R M O N S,

OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAIN IN

SCOTLAND, BY

ALEXANDER GERARD, D.D.

LONDON:

Printed by C. & J. Clay, at the New Press.

1841.

S E R M O N S

BY

ALEXANDER GERARD, D.D.

12. D. c

SERMONS,

BY

ALEXANDER GERARD, D. D. *R*

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN KING'S
COLLEGE, ABERDEEN,

AND

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN
ORDINARY IN SCOTLAND.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR CHARLES DILLY IN THE POULTRY.

MDCCCLXXX. SERMON

16

S E R M O N S

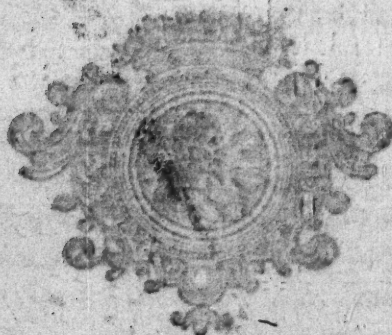
BY

ALEXANDER GERRARD, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN KING
COLLEGE, ABERDEEN,

AND

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN
ORDINARY IN SCOTLAND.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. and W. Smith, in the Strand.

M D C C L X X .

CONTENTS.

SERMON I. II.

RELIGION intimately connected with
ordinary life. — Page 1—23

PSALM CXvi. 9. *I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.*

SERMON III.

Justice the decorum of the character of
judges. — 49

DEUT. xvi. 20. *That which is altogether
just shalt thou follow.*

SERMON IV. V.

The first promise of the Redeemer. 71—99

GEN. iii. 15. *And I will put enmity between
thee and the woman, and between thy seed and
her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt
bruise his heel.*

SERMON VI.

The promise of the Redeemer to Abraham.

125

GEN. xxii. 18. *And in thy seed shall all the
nations of the earth be blessed.*

SERMON

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N VII.

Constancy in Religion enforced by the common sufferings of human life. — 151

I COR. X. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.*

S E R M O N VIII.

The old age of the righteous, honourable. — 185

PROV. XVII. 31. *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.*

S E R M O N IX.

The diversity of mens' natural tempers. — 211

S E R M O N X.

The necessity of governing the natural temper. — 237

S E R M O N XI.

The manner of governing the natural temper. — 261

PROV. XXV. 28. *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*

S E R M O N XII.

Virtuous solicitude. — 285

PSALM

C O N T E N T S.

PSALM cxix. 5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

S E R M O N XIII.

Regard to positive institutions, essential to goodness of character. — — 309

LUKE i. 6. *And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.*

S E R M O N XIV.

Redeeming the time. — — 327

EPH. v. 16. *Redeeming the time.*

S E R M O N XV.

The truth of Christianity confirmed by the manner in which its evidences were proposed.

355

JOHN viii. 14. *Jesus answered and said unto them, though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.*

S E R M O N XVI. XVII.

The advantages of the virtuous for the enjoyment of external good. — 379—403

PSALM xxxvii. 16. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.*

S E R M O N XVIII.

The power of virtuous resolutions. 427

PSALM

CONTENTS.

PSALM cxix. 106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

SERMON XIX.

The house of mourning more improving than the house of feasting. — — 453

Eccl. vii. 2. *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.*

SERMON XX.

— — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —

SERMON XXI.

The truth of Christianity confirmed by the manner in which its evidences were proposed.

— — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —

SERMON XXII.

SERMON — — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —

SERMON XXIII.

The power of virtuous resolutions. — — — — —
— — — — —
— — — — —

S E R M O N I.

RELIGION INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH ORDINARY LIFE.

PSALM cxvi. 9.

*I will walk before the Lord in the land of the
living.*

MAN is a being of a compound nature; he consists of a soul and a body. By the former he is allied to God and angels; by the latter to earth and earthly things. In consequence of this, he is capable of two different sorts of enjoyments, subjected to two distinct classes of desires, and lives at once in two dissimilar states. From the body arise appetites for worldly things, and pleasure in them; from the soul, desires of things spiritual and eternal, and a relish for them. We live an animal or a natural life, and we live at the same time a rational or spiritual life. Thus

A

by

by the very constitution of our nature, our attention is drawn different ways, our views are directed to contrary objects, and we are engaged in dissimilar employments. By concern about the one, we may become negligent of the other.

THE things of this world are the objects of sense; they are continually soliciting our notice; they force themselves into our view; they affect us strongly. By these means they are very apt to render us regardless of spiritual and eternal things, which can be perceived only by faith, which make but a weak impression on the thoughtless, which cannot influence our conduct, except we set ourselves voluntarily and designedly to meditate upon them. While we are intent on our occupations for the support of the animal life, we may very readily fall into neglect with respect to that occupation which belongs to us as reasonable and immortal creatures. We should guard against this with a care proportioned to the danger of our becoming guilty of it.

THE scripture perpetually inculcates upon us, that the eternal happiness of our souls, and the practice of holiness, by which it is secured, ought to be our principal concern, and to engage us more earnestly than any of the possessions

sions and enjoyments which can profit us only in the present life, or any of those worldly employments which are subservient to the attainment of them. The least reflection is sufficient to convince us of the propriety and the importance of this conduct. To those who at all think seriously, the difficulty lies only in *preserving* a commanding impression of the necessity of this conduct, and putting it in practice, amidst the busy scenes and the dissipation of common life. These frequently obliterate the conviction, and efface the sentiments, which are produced by the most affecting representations of the superior value of spiritual and eternal things, exhibited in an hour of retirement and devotion.

IT is of great moment, therefore, to acquire a striking sense of the manner in which a concern for the salvation of our souls, and application to the duties of religion, may be intermingled with our whole worldly employment, and exerted in the various circumstances of ordinary life. For discoursing on this subject, we may naturally take occasion from the words now read; *I will walk*, says David; *before the Lord in the land of the living*. To *walk before the Lord* *, and, To *walk with the*

* Gen. xvii. 1. xxiv. 40. xlviii. 15. 1 Kings iii. 6. 2 Kings xx. 3. Psal. lvi. 13.

4 *Religion intimately connected* SERM. I.

*Lord**, are beautiful expressions used in scripture, on purpose to convey this very view of religion: and the former of them conveys it the more explicitly in this place, by the psalmist's having added, *in the land of the living*. By these last words he no doubt designed to express the constancy of that obedience to God, which he promised in return for the mercies acknowledged in this psalm; he meant to intimate that he would persist in it to the end of his life: but they likewise naturally imply, that he would incorporate his religion with his whole ordinary life, and make it to run through all the occupations in which he might ever be employed in common with other men, and to blend itself with all the transactions relative to the present world, in which he might be at any time engaged. It is certain that the scriptures always suppose religion to be connected with common life, and designed for influencing us in all the affairs of it: they never represent it as a thing which may be laid aside when we come into the world, or for which we have no occasion while we are busied in the labour of our stations.

* Gen. v. 22, 24. vi. 9. Mich. vi. 8. Mal. ii. 6.

To

To consider religion in this important point of view, as what ought to mix with all our secular employments, and give a tincture and complection to all those actions which have the most intimate relation to the present animal life, is what I now propose.

By setting religion in this light, I do not mean to affirm, that it contains no duties distinct from the right conduct of our ordinary business, or that there are no exercises belonging to it, which are abstracted from common life. There are times and seasons appropriated to particular religious duties, into which no concern about our ordinary business should be allowed to intrude. There are assemblies called together for partaking in the sacraments, for public worship, and for hearing the word, where we must be intent on these exercises alone, and whence we must exclude all worldly thoughts and cares. There are exercises of devotion which must be performed in the secrecy and stillness of retirement; prayer, the reading of the scriptures, meditation on the principles of religion and the obligations of our several duties, self-examination, confession of our sins, and resolutions of amendment. We are not truly religious, if we allow concern for our temporal interests and diligence in our worldly business to lead us into the neglect

of these. They have not an immediate relation to the employments of our stations, but they are consistent with them: they suspend them for a little, but they can be performed without any inconvenient interruption of them. These duties of religion enter not directly into common life, nor are intimately incorporated with its functions; they are rather in appearance abstracted from them: but they are in reality subservient to the right discharge of them. They form impressions which may influence us in life; they revive sentiments which, without them, the hurry of business would dissipate; they invigorate principles of conduct which the avocations of the world would enfeeble, but which the good man must act upon every day. Without attendance on these duties of religion, we could have no good sentiments or principles to carry into the world with us: but we attend upon them to no purpose, if we carry not into the world with us, if we maintain not amidst all the bustle of the world, the good sentiments and principles which they are fitted to infuse. The church and the closet are the places where these duties are performed; but the world is the place where we must display the effects which they produce, and exert the temper of holiness which they cherish. The spiritual life must be recruited by the exercises of retirement

tirement and retreat: but when it is recruited by these, as the nourishment adapted to it, it is in the world that it must shew its vigour: its functions must mix themselves with all those of the animal life; our employment for eternity must be interwoven with all our occupations for time.

IN the sequel I shall, *first*, point out the importance of this view of religion; and, *secondly*, explain it.

FIRST, *I shall* point out the importance of considering religion as connected with all the parts of our ordinary life.

THERE is no mistake about the nature of religion more dangerous than an opinion that it is inconsistent, or even unconnected, with the ordinary business of life: this opinion will produce different effects on different persons; but all the effects which it can produce, will be pernicious.

IF it be entertained, it will infallibly lead the generality to neglect religion altogether. Present things are so constantly in our view, the wants and the demands of the natural life are felt so strongly, that most men will be ingrossed by them, if they apprehend that,

without neglecting them, they cannot secure future and unseen things. Did all men perceive clearly, that they may *walk with God* while they are mixing in the societies and employments of men, and that they may most effectually promote their eternal happiness while they are occupied in the business of their temporal vocations, many would endeavour to *work out their salvation* *, who scarcely think of it, because they imagine it unconnected with their ordinary business; or incompatible with their worldly pursuits.

SOME however have so deep a sense of the importance of their eternal interests, and so strong a solicitude to secure them, that an opinion of their inconsistency with the business and pursuits of life will drive them into the opposite extreme. Under the influence of this mistake many have secluded themselves from the world, withdrawn from all the occupations of life, and given up themselves to idleness, contemplation, and solitary devotion. The life of such persons may be harmless, but it is useless: it may be freer from vice than the lives of others, but it is less virtuous; they have not been exposed to the same temptations with others; their innocence has in many cases

* Phil. ii. 12, *work out your salvation*

arisen only from their want of opportunity for committing sin, not from strength of mind, or the vigour of virtuous principles. Were a life of monkish indolence necessary or conducive to the improvement and salvation of our souls, God would not have placed us in a world where we have so many wants that cannot be satisfied without diligent application to a variety of occupations. An active and busy life is perfectly consistent with all that God requires of us, for pleasing him or for obtaining eternal happiness. Holiness preserved uncorrupted, and exercised vigorously, in active life, is much worthier than the inoffensive blamelessness of the mere recluse. You should yield your active service unto God. You cannot please him more effectually, than by following your several vocations, by engaging in the ordinary employments of life, by pursuing them with industry, and being conversant about them in a right manner. You do not serve God, you do not labour for eternity, you do not take care of your souls, only when you are meditating, or reading, or hearing, or praying, or partaking of the Lord's supper; but also as effectually, though these purposes be not perhaps so directly in your thoughts when you are going about your worldly business in a virtuous manner, when you are honestly and conscientiously doing the work of your stations.

You

You may live to God, and yet live in the world. To renounce the world and fly to solitude, is to renounce the station which God has allotted us, and abandon the opportunities of doing good and becoming good, which he has given us.

MEN may entertain the mistake of which we are speaking, without running into either of the extremes now mentioned. They may regard religion as something wholly abstracted from life, and yet may engage in the ordinary business of life, without neglecting religion altogether. In this case they will take up with a false species of religion: they will be concerned, perhaps anxiously concerned, for their salvation, but they will pursue it in an improper manner. They imagine that the state of their souls depends only on some formal transactions with God, on some solitary and secret exertions of the will and the affections in dedicating themselves to him, and accepting of Jesus Christ; and that it is no wise affected by the manner in which they carry on their ordinary business. They think that they may be religious, though they be immoral; that they may provide for eternity, though they neglect the duties of time; that they may be in a state of grace, though they be bad husbands, bad wives, unnatural parents, undutiful

undutiful children, unfaithful servants, unkind and quarrelsome neighbours, or dishonest dealers. They regard the graces of the spirit as totally distinct from the moral virtues; the conduct which God approves, as perfectly different from that behaviour which is useful to mankind. They make an unnatural divorce between religion and morality. In the place of true holiness they substitute an absurd and unprofitable superstition. Alas, my brethren, they deceive themselves! If they act according to this idea, their religion will have no greater influence upon their conduct, than if they made no pretences to religion; and therefore it will have no more influence upon their eternal salvation. Genuine religion is wholly practical: grace is but the principle of virtue and good works. Your religion can be of no value, I should rather say, you have no real religion, if it do not enter into life with you, if it do not pervade and animate all your actions.

A VERY great part of that conduct by which your eternal happiness may be promoted, consists in transacting your ordinary business in a proper and virtuous manner. There is scarcely an action of your lives so insignificant as not either to promote or to obstruct your salvation. The most trivial and common actions may be performed right, or they may

may be performed wrong. We should all, therefore, maintain an uninterrupted care to perform all the actions of our lives aright. If we maintain this care, we shall forward our everlasting happiness, by the very same actions by which we obtain or enjoy present things. Many of the common actions of life are far from being trivial or unimportant in a religious and moral view. It is by living in society, and employing ourselves in the ordinary business of it, that we can find opportunity for many of our most important duties, for many of the principal functions of the spiritual and christian life: and by seizing these opportunities, and using them properly, we shall most effectually provide for eternity. It is from the ordinary occurrences of life, that we find occasion for the principal exertions of those virtues which regard either ourselves, our neighbour, or our God: and these virtues comprehend the whole of our duty, and constitute that holiness which is the necessary preparation for heaven.

THE observations which have been hitherto made, abundantly shew the importance of that view of religion which I am endeavouring to give you; they likewise explain it in some measure: for the more particular explication of it, which was the *second* thing proposed, let

us briefly point out, how the *three* great branches of our duty now mentioned, interweave themselves with the ordinary actions and employments of life.

I. THERE are many duties which we owe properly to ourselves, for practising which we find the opportunity in the course of ordinary life.

As long as we dwell in these earthly tabernacles, some foresight and diligence about the necessities and conveniences of the present life, is unavoidable. God doth not forbid it: he hath not made it inconsistent with the pursuit of future happiness. None would wish to starve or to be naked: God doth not require you to court these hardships. You may be diligent; you ought to be diligent in your callings: God not only allows, but commands you to be diligent; *not slothful in business* *, is a precept of divine authority; there are many similar precepts; God promises his blessing to diligence, and gives frequent encouragement to it. That man sins, and obstructs his own progress to heaven, who is idle in his station. Religion renders industry a duty towards ourselves, enforced by the authority of God: by reflecting

* Rom. xii. 11.

on this obligation to it, and allowing it to have some influence upon us, we shall convert every exertion of industry in our trade or profession into an act of obedience to God: and if, while we are prompted to industry by the instincts and prospects of the animal life, common to all men, we be also impelled to it by a regard to the commandment of God, this additional motive cannot fail to quicken our industry, to increase it, and to render it more successful.

God requires that the immediate objects of your industry should not engross your whole hearts; that you should not imagine the attainment of them sufficient to make you happy; that amidst your labour for them you should maintain a sense that there are things of infinitely greater consequence, to be either obtained or lost. Religion requires you to carry these sentiments through life with you: they will not enfeeble your industry, they will only restrain it from forced and unnatural exertions; they will be no hindrance to its regular and healthful motions, they will only prevent its running into distorted and convulsive agitations; they will not destroy that eagerness which gives spirit and perseverance to your endeavours, they will only extinguish that anxiety, solicitude, and carefulness, which,
while

while they make you neglect eternal things, often render you at the same time incapable of pursuing present things in the most effectual manner, and create immediate vexation of spirit, for which no success can make amends. In a word, such sentiments carried through life, and acted upon, will only sanctify your industry, and render it conducive to your future happiness, while it continues as subservient as ever, or even becomes more subservient to your present interest.

WE are so formed as to be capable of enjoyment in those earthly things which we possess. God doth not contradict our constitution by his laws; he doth not require us to become insensible even to the lowest pleasures. All men eat and drink: they are among the most common actions of your lives; yet religion is concerned in them. If, in eating and drinking, you are luxurious, intemperate, or debauched, you swallow down poison to your immortal souls: but if you eat and drink temperately and in moderation, without overvaluing or repining for the pleasures which you have not, or abusing those which you have, avoiding sensuality and excess; if you eat and drink in that degree which promotes the health and strength of the body, which renders it fitter for the service of the soul, which is decent,
and

and becomes a reasonable creature, made for much higher enjoyments; then you serve God every time you eat and drink; you nourish your souls unto eternal life, by the very same actions by which you daily nourish your bodies.

It is a duty which we owe to ourselves, to preserve sobriety of mind, composure of spirit, a freedom from all violent passions, humility, and self-government. It is in the ordinary employments of life that we find both temptations to violate this temper, and occasions for exercising it: it is only by maintaining it amidst all the occurrences of common life, and all the calls, and vicissitudes, and tumults of business, that we can obey those divine precepts which enjoin it. You are engaged in the pursuit of some considerable advantage: you have now an opportunity of curbing the violence of your desires, of keeping them from possessing your whole souls: this is incumbent on you, and by this you shall prepare yourselves for that happy state which excludes every ungoverned passion. In the course of your occupations you meet with unexpected incidents, sudden turns, perplexities, and intricacies: you are called to avoid being discomposed by them; this will be a preparation for the superior regions of per-

fect serenity and peace, at the same time that it prevents present uneasiness, and even fits you for the most proper management of your worldly business.

IN this world, objects frequently occur which tend to draw us off from the path of life. They meet us in the scenes of business, and in the hours of relaxation and amusement, in company, in solitude, in every situation. Continual circumspection and watchfulness against their drawing us into the ways of death, by seducing us into sin, is a duty which we owe to our own souls: and it is a duty which we must put in practice every day, and every hour, in every place, and in every condition. We must carry this temper through life with us, we must preserve and exercise it in all the various circumstances in which at any time we stand, else we cannot persist stedfastly in the narrow way that leads to heaven.

2. IN like manner, in the ordinary business of our lives we shall find the most frequent and the best opportunities of performing our several duties to our fellow-men. Religion requires us to embrace these opportunities: and by embracing them, and performing the duties suitable to them, we shall serve God, and

B

please

please him, and contribute to the salvation of our own souls.

You spend the day in merchandize, in labour, in the business of your calling whatever it is: you must carry your religion along with you; you must exercise it all the time you are thus employed. You may do your work either honestly and uprightly, or the contrary. If you deceive those with whom you have dealings, or defraud them, or injure them, you injure your own souls much more, you move a step forward to destruction. But if in every part of your business without exception, you act justly and equitably, and deal with integrity and faithfulness; you *walk before the Lord*, while you seem to be only busy in your worldly calling; you advance in your journey towards heaven, while you seem to be only going round in the circle of employments which belong to this mortal state. The shop, the exchange, the occupations of active life, form the only theatre on which the virtues of justice, fidelity, and honesty can be practised; and without constantly practising these, you can have no religion. These virtues tend to secure the confidence of men, and to promote your worldly prosperity; and by the uniform practice of them, you likewise *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth*

moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal.*

IN the train of life, in the intercourse of society and business, some person does you undesigned harm, or an intended injury. This is the time when you have it in your power to exercise, and by exercising to improve, patience, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, kindness. It is only by exercising them in such circumstances, by making them to run through all the actions to which such circumstances give occasion, that you can shew yourselves to *be the children of the Highest* †, and heirs of the kingdom of life. If, on the occasions mentioned, you, on the contrary, indulge bitterness, anger, wrath, malice, revenge; if you give way to the expressions of these dispositions in the communications of company, or the connexions of business; you show yourselves alienated from the gentle spirit of true religion, and you render yourselves fit for the society of those fallen angels in whom malevolent passions reign.

You go into company, you enter into conversation: the characters and the conduct of others become the topics. This is the situation

* Mat. vi. 19.

† Luke vi. 35.

in which you are called to make candid and favourable constructions, to vindicate aspersed innocence, to clear up misconstrued virtues, to agologize for exaggerated failings, to *speake the truth in love* *. You have opportunity for these duties every day : it is in the relaxations of society, in the turns of common conversation, that you find the opportunity ; and they are essential and important duties of religion. If instead of performing them, you, in your gayest meetings, and most unreserved talk, defame, slander, revile, or backbite, you need make no pretensions to true religion in your closets or at church. *If any man among you, says the apostle James, seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain* †. He that bridleth not his tongue from offences so heinous as these, doth the office of Satan, and by the employment of those which he reckons his disengaged hours, and for which he thinks that little account will be required of him, entitleth himself to a portion with Satan.

IN the course of your employments, by the events which cast up in the train of your ordinary business, you have opportunities of returning good to your benefactors, of doing

* Eph. iv. 25.

† Jam. i. 26.

services to those who have done you evil, of supplying the wants of the poor, by employing them, or by other means which are in your way, of supporting the friendless, of producing concealed merit, or of doing some other good office to those with whom you meet. Different employments afford different means of doing the same good offices to others, or opportunities of doing different good offices; but every employment affords some means, and some opportunities. It is a great part of the duty which God requires of you, to embrace and improve these opportunities: this is to *do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*; by this you *lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life* *.

I CANNOT mention particularly all the ways in which true holiness will enter into social life, and exert itself towards others, in all the varied scenes and complicated situations which turn up in the course of ordinary business. In addition to the instances already given, I shall only observe in general, that every act of proper behaviour which we show as parents, as children, as masters, as ser-

* 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

22 *Religion intimately connected, &c.* SERM. I.

vants, as we belong to a particular occupation or profession, as we are placed in a particular relation, is a real act of holiness, pleasing to God, and conducive to our eternal happiness. On the other hand, every instance of improper behaviour in any of these relations or situations, displeases God, and retards our progress to heaven. When we contemplate religion as thus concerned in our whole behaviour towards others, as either observed or violated in all our social actions, how extensive does it appear to be? how uninterrupted are our opportunities for it? how constant should be our attention to it? how often do we neglect or transgress its obligations, when we imagine our actions perfectly indifferent, and removed wholly out of the province of religion?

3. WE must likewise carry piety along with us through the whole course of our lives; we must exercise godliness in all our occupations: else we have no true religion, nor can be fit for the enjoyment of God. This is an important part of our subject, the illustration of which we cannot now enter upon.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

RELIGION INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH ORDINARY LIFE.

PSALM cxvi. 9.

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

RELIGION considered in its just extent, contains two sorts of duties, the duties of piety, and those which regard the actions of the natural and social life. Both are essential to it. But men show a strong propensity to consider the former as unconnected with life, and the latter as unconnected with religion, and by a misconception of both sorts equally, though in different respects, to disunite religion from the occupations of common life. It proceeds from a partial view of both these; and it tends to render our practice of both defective.

MEN confine their idea of piety to the acts of immediate worship; they consider it not as what should, as what can enter into common

life; they think that they serve God, only when they are worshipping him, and disengaged from their worldly employments. Conceiving religion in so false and contracted a light, they necessarily regard the actions of the natural and social life, as without the verge of religion, as not requiring or admitting any regulation or direction from its influence.

IN consequence of these partial and imperfect conceptions, some have withdrawn from the business of life, that they might give up themselves wholly to devotion, or have become negligent in their lawful calling, as interrupting their application to religion; and many more, intent on their worldly employments and interests, and regarding all acts of devotion as encroaching upon these, neglect them totally, or crowd them into as little time as possible: *God is not in all their thoughts* *.

Persons of a serious turn, and sensible of the importance of piety, will apply to what they consider as belonging to it. But if they imagine acts of immediate worship to be all that belongs to it, their application will be of little value. They will be punctual in performing these: but they will think that when they have performed these, they have done all

* Psal. x. 4.

that

that piety requires, and are abundantly religious; and too often they imagine that, if they spend some hours of the day in devotion, they may do, through the rest of it, whatever they please, whatever their vicious passions prompt them to; at least they are not sufficiently careful to avoid doing so. Thus their religion becomes a mere round of external services, attended perhaps with transient and unmeaning emotions of soul, but not a preparation for the right conduct of life; and they bear in themselves that character of corruption, which the apostle assigns to the men of the last days, *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* *.

WHETHER men have a regard to religion, or have not, if the actions of the natural and social life be considered as without the province of religion, the necessary consequence will be, that men shall think themselves at liberty to perform them, not according to the rules of religion. Whenever we look upon the ordinary actions of common life as indifferent, whenever we forget that there is either virtue or vice in almost every one of them, we are in great danger of indulging vice and contracting guilt in the performance of them. Whenever we allow ourselves to imagine that

* 2 Tim. iii. 5.

these actions have no influence on our salvation, we shall be ready to do them in such a manner as must obstruct our salvation.

Of the three classes of duties which are incumbent upon us, those which regard ourselves, and those which regard other men, are too often considered as little connected with religion, and are, for that reason, reckoned such as may be in some measure neglected without great danger to our salvation. I have therefore shown that our habitual behaviour, both towards ourselves and towards others, in the various situations of common life, necessarily implies good or evil, and promotes or obstructs our everlasting happiness. The other class of duties, those which regard God, and are comprehended under the name of piety, are, on the contrary, often considered as unconnected with the ordinary business of life. In opposition to this mistake, I now propose to show, That we must carry piety along with us through the whole course of our lives, that we must exercise godliness in all our occupations; else we can have no true religion, nor be fit for the enjoyment of God in heaven.

WE may acquire some lively impressions of God, in retirement, or in the ordinances of worship; but if these impressions do not remain

main with us and actuate us, when we enter into the world, and all the time we are conversant in the world, they are of no moment. Religious affections may be nourished in the retreats of devotion, as a child is fed within doors: but it is in the open air, and by the bustle of exercise, that the child acquires and shows health, vigour, and agility; and it is in the field of the world, and by being introduced into its several occupations, that the religious affections obtain and display strength, firmness, and energy. It is in the world they are put to the trial, it is there we find opportunities for exerting them, and it is by being exerted there that they are improved into a commanding temper of piety.

THERE is no situation in life, which gives not scope for some exercise of godliness, and which requires it not, if we would not be wanting to our duty. Piety or a regard to God, is a vital spirit which may run through, and ought to run through, all the virtues which respect either ourselves or others, to animate, to model, and direct them. It is not excluded from any place or condition which admits any virtue whatever; it cannot be dispensed with from any such place or condition, but that virtue loses much of its lustre, and is even in danger of perishing.

LOVE

Love to God is an affection which does not spend itself in silent admiration, or warm feelings: it is fit to enter into life, and to act in life. We are commanded to **KEEP** ourselves *in the love of God* *: it is a temper which may possess us as constantly, and influence us as regularly, as affection to a parent or a friend. It should influence us through life, in the whole of our behaviour, in a manner similar to that in which affection to a parent or a friend, operates on such parts of our behaviour as have a respect to them. Love to God does not display itself so much, or ascertain its sincerity and ardour so unexceptionably, by any emotions inwardly felt, or by any raptures of devotion, as by its effects upon our actions; by making us delight to obey and please God in every part of our behaviour; by making us willing to relinquish what we most fondly desire, or to incur what we most vehemently dread, rather than offend him in committing any sin, or neglecting any duty; by alluring us to the imitation of all those moral attributes which render God the object of our love; and by cherishing benevolence, and drawing out beneficence to all men, who are the children of our Father in heaven. Love to God will find opportunities for some of these exer-

* Jude, ver. 21.

cises of it, in all our worldly business, in all the actions and events of common life: and if any man neglect these exercises of it, whenever he finds opportunity for them, *how dwelleth the love of God in him* *? His heart is void of it, though liveliness of imagination or a constitutional warmth of affection may lead him to presume that his love to God is ardent.

REVERENCE of God is not more analogous to the love of God, in itself, than in its effects upon our ordinary conduct. It is not exercised only when we set ourselves to contemplate and celebrate his greatness: we may be, and we ought to be, *in the fear of the Lord all the day long* †. If we have any reverence of God, it will show itself every hour in our most common behaviour; in the shade of solitude, amidst the temptations of society, the cares of business, and the relaxation of amusements, in every situation, it will make us to *stand in awe, and not sin* ‡; it will prompt us to act in a manner worthy of the presence, the majesty, and the perfections of God.

GRATITUDE is due to God for the blessings which we receive from him. The events of ordinary life furnish us with constant subjects

* 1 John iii. 17.

† Prov. xxiii. 17.

‡ Psal. iv. 4.

of gratitude. You eat your daily food ; you find yourselves in health ; you receive the price of your labour ; you obtain something which you desired ; you prosper in your way : your duty in all these situations, the apostle Paul points out, *In every thing give thanks ; be grateful, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you* *. The exercise of gratitude is not confined to professed acknowledgments of the mercies which we have received, in praise and thanksgiving, in private or public devotion. The world also is a field for the exercise of gratitude. It is exercised whenever it implants in the heart a new motive to abstinence from sin and hatred of it, whenever it warms the soul with additional alacrity in doing good, and makes us take greater pleasure in it. These exercises of gratitude should be diffused through life, as much as the blessings are, which demand our gratitude ; they should influence us as often as we are engaged in any action which can imply either good or evil : and what one action of our lives does not imply them ?

COMMON life is the acknowledged sphere of resignation to the will of God. Piety exerting itself in resignation, is the proper root, and

* 1 Thess. v. 18.

the only firm support of many of those duties to ourselves, the operation of which through the occurrences of common life, either has been already delineated, or may easily be traced; composure, for instance, amidst the tumults and fluctuations of the world, tranquillity in the uncertainty of its prospects, contentment and self-enjoyment under its disappointments, fortitude in the view of its dangers. If these virtues are nipt off from piety, they become puny, and wither, and die. They must be practised through life; but they cannot be practised except the exertions of a pious temper be twisted, as it were, with all the acts of them, to give them strength. All the events of life, are uncertain; we are often in adversity, our favourite designs are disappointed, our dearest comforts are taken from us, we become interested about trifles, and they fail us: we cannot perform the duties which we owe to ourselves in these seasons, without deriving aid from piety. These are the seasons which demand the practice of resignation, submission, and trust in God: these are the seasons in which we must put forth all our strength to retain and exercise these pious principles, else we shall fall into the sins of peevishness, discontent, repining, murmuring, anxiety, and solicitude.

PIETY

PIETY requires subjection to the authority of God, as well as submission to his providence. A sense of his authority will produce a constant disposition to obey his laws. But his laws are nothing else but rules for the particulars of our behaviour in all the various circumstances of human life: there is not a situation in which we can be placed, that is without the verge of their direction; there is not a situation in which our conduct will not be affected by our having a regard to God's supreme authority, or by our failing in that regard.

GOD is not an unconcerned spectator of the behaviour of reasonable beings; he trieth their hearts, he weigheth all their actions, he approveth, or he disapproveth them. A sense of this, a prevailing respect to his judgment, a contempt of the opinions of all the world when opposed to it, is an important part of piety, and a part of it for exercising which the state of this world gives continual opportunity. In this world, we see vice practised, and hear it justified; we find virtue neglected, and even turned into ridicule: the immediate pleasures and advantages of sin disguise its horrors; the the present uneasinesses and inconveniencies to which virtue sometimes exposes men, eclipse its beauty; corrupt fashion seems to alter the measures of right and wrong behaviour; the promiscuous

cuous distribution of outward things renders us inattentive to the opposite natures and the opposite consequences of righteousness and iniquity. Such situations frequently occur in the train of ordinary life; and they give opportunity for exerting a supreme regard to the unerring judgment of God, who can see through every disguise, who cannot be imposed upon by the most plausible pretences, whose *judgment is always according to truth* *. This regard is exerted when, in the whole tenour of our lives, we maintain an abhorrence of all evil, and the love of all goodness, and persist invariably in avoiding the one and pursuing the other, uninfluenced by the false opinions of men, or the irregular appearances of the world, and valuing only the approbation of God,

PIETY leads us to the imitation of God: but all that is enjoined us under the idea of imitating God, consists in the right performance of the several actions of common life, particularly of the social life. It consists in our *loving our enemies, doing good to them that hate us, blessing them that curse us, praying for them which despitefully use us and persecute us, giving to every man that asketh of us, and lending, causing no man to despair* †. It consists in *putting away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and*

* Rom. ii. 2,
 ἀντὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.

† Mat. v. 42---48. Luke vi. 27---36. μὴ

*clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice, and being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, and walking in love**. It consists in *purifying ourselves†*, and *being holy in all manner of conversation‡*. It is only in the course of our ordinary conduct, and amidst the temptations which occur in society, that we can have scope for these exertions of a god-like disposition.

IN a word, all the affections which belong to a temper of piety, unite their force to restrain us from doing evil, and to excite us to do good, in all the varied situations of common life. Every pious affection shows itself by suitable expressions in the offices of devotion; but no pious affection is completed by these immediate expressions of it: there are likewise active exertions of piety, which run through the whole of our ordinary behaviour. Every regard to God, in a manner peculiar to itself, inclines or urges us to all the duties of life, that is, to the right performance of all, even our most common actions.

DEVOUT persons have often recommended it as highly beneficial, to mix acts of immediate worship, silent ejaculations of adoration, thankf-

§ Eph. iv. 31, 32. v. 1, 2. † 1 John iii. 3. ‡ Pet. i. 15.

giving,

giving; prayer, confession, or repentance, with our ordinary employments; and have justly remarked that, unobserved by men, and without any interruption of these employments, we may find time and opportunity for them in the busiest scenes of life, and even in the midst of our innocent amusements. This is a proper and very advantageous practice; *and yet show I unto you a more excellent way* * : piety may be, and ought to be, still more intimately mixt and incorporated with our ordinary employments; they ought all to be constantly carried on under the restraints which religion imposes, and by the principles which it inspires. To carry them on in this manner, will be to come up to the full import of the descriptions of a life of virtue uniformly pursued under religious impressions, which the scripture gives, when it speaks of good men as *setting the Lord always before them* †, *acknowledging him in all their ways* ‡, *walking before the Lord, or walking with God.*

THE gospel having brought us acquainted with the Son of God, requires faith in him. Faith in Christ may be considered, either as a firm belief of what he has taught us, or as a dependence on his atonement and mediation

* 1 Cor. xii. 31.

† Psal. xvi. 8.

‡ Prov. iii. 6.

for our acceptance with God, notwithstanding the demerit of our sins and the imperfection of our holiness. "Considered in both lights, faith is a principle fit to run through our whole lives, and to mix with all the most ordinary actions of them.

ALL the truths which Christ hath taught us in the gospel, are motives to the practice of holiness; they are constantly proposed in scripture, as incitements both to holiness in general, and to the several particular virtues. The faith which the gospel requires, is not a more *assent* to these truths: it implies such a lively impression, and such a permanent sense of them, as may form our whole temper to holiness, and influence all our actions. A temper of holiness consists in the strength of good affections, and in purity from vicious passions: good affections are excited when their objects are brought into our view, and placed in a striking light; they are strengthened when their objects are brought often into view, and attentively considered: the truths of religion set these objects of good affections in the most striking lights, and a firm belief of the truths of religion keeps these objects constantly in our view, and fixes our attention upon them; and thus renders the good affections habitually prevalent in our hearts. It is this same belief
likewise

likewise that presents to our minds all those considerations which tend to counteract vicious passions, and to purify us gradually from them. Every action proceeds from some motive, without which neither would the action be done, nor that affection which is its immediate principle be supported: every good action proceeds from some religious motive, from some truth urging us to the practice of it; it is faith that suggests this motive, and it must suggest it in the moment in which the action is to be done. True faith keeps all the principles of religion, which can in any way influence our conduct, which can either restrain us from doing evil or prompt us to do good, in a continual readiness to occur to us, whenever we have occasion for them. We have occasion for them in every situation in which we have occasion to act. Faith therefore must attend us, and suggest the principles of religion as motives to action, in every place, and in every one of our various occupations. It must run through our whole conduct, bestowing vigour and stability on all our virtues, *purifying our hearts**, *working by love†*, producing *good works‡*. It alone can furnish the weapons with which we may combat all the alluring prospects which sin sets before us, and all the difficulties and

* Aft. xv. 9. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ Tit. iii. 8. Jam. ii. 14. 26.

gers to which virtue may expose us; and of these weapons we have need every moment; *this*, says John, *is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith**: to overcome the world, our faith must operate as often as we are conversant with the world. It is when faith thus exerts itself in restraining us from sin, in cherishing good affections, in exciting us to the several duties of life, that we may be said to *walk by faith*†. The apostle Paul exhibits his own faith in this very attitude, when he says, *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*‡.

FAITH considered as a dependence upon Christ, seems not to mingle so congenially with the ordinary actions of life: yet it is truly fit to mingle with them in a very great degree. Whenever we reflect that we have committed any sin, and feel remorse for it, (and, in the present frail state of man, how often must this happen to every sensible heart?) it is faith exerting itself in dependence upon Christ, that mitigates our sorrow, and restores our chearfulness. Whenever we are conscious of a good action, when the consciousness of it gives us *good hope*||, it is by trust in Jesus Christ that this hope is supported, and pre-

* 1 John v. 4. 5. † 2 Cor. v. 7. ‡ Gal. ii. 20. || 2 Thess. ii. 16.

served from sinking beneath the sense of our imperfection and guilt. It is dependence upon Christ, that encourages us to amend what we know to be wrong in ourselves, and in our former conduct; for it is dependence upon him, that makes us to feel that it shall not be in vain: and while we are imperfect creatures, a great part of right conduct must consist in endeavours to do the several actions of life better than we have done them in former instances. In general, hopes and fears of futurity not only arise in the hours of reflection, but often influence us in the actions of life; and in a Christian, hope and fear can never be wholly separated from exercises of faith towards Jesus, who *delivereth us from the wrath to come**, and *through whom eternal life is the gift of God to us*†.

THE gospel reveals to us the Holy Spirit also, and requires us to exercise dependence on the assistance which he is sent on purpose to impart. To be convinced that this dependence should run through our whole lives, and mingle with all our actions, and to understand how it may do so, we need only recollect the end for which the assistance of the Spirit is given. It is given for our sanctification; it is given to be a principle of purity, and virtue, and activity

* 1 Thess. i. 10. † Rom. vi. 23.

in well-doing. Through the whole course of our life, and in all its occupations, we have opportunities of avoiding evil and of doing good; and whenever we exert ourselves in either, it should be with dependence on the aids of the Divine Spirit. We should have an habitual trust in these, similar to that habitual sense which good men entertain of the dependence of their nature and all their powers upon God. If we have such trust, it will lead us, not only to recognise, at stated times, the Holy Spirit as the author of our virtues, and to pray to God for his aids; but also to look up to him in the very moment of action, and, by the consciousness of the presence and support of so powerful an assistant, to invigorate ourselves in every hour of languor, and to encourage ourselves in every moment of temptation and difficulty, that we may, without weariness or intermission, put forth all the strength which he imparts to us, in resisting all the attacks of sin, and practising every virtue, as we find the opportunity. It is this habitual and active improvement of the divine aids, that the apostle recommends to the Galatians; *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit* *: the expression implies, that we should have the whole tenour of our ordinary behaviour regulated by the influence of the Spirit of God.

* Gal. v. 16.

THUS

THUS I have endeavoured to represent religion to you, in its connexion with ordinary life. I have shown the importance of this view of it; and I have explained it, by pointing out the opportunities which ordinary life affords for the practice of religion, and by tracing the influence of religion on our behaviour in these several opportunities. Religion consists not in our withdrawing from the occupations of the present world, but in our being conversant in them after a virtuous manner. The apostle Paul, in describing that goodness which the gospel was revealed on purpose to enforce, reduces it to the three heads of virtue which we have now illustrated, *that we live soberly, righteously, and godly*, and he adds, *in this present world* *: the addition is not vain, it suggests the very idea which I have made it my business to unfold; it intimates that we have no religion, no Christianity, if we do not carry it into the world with us, and exercise it in all the circumstances of life. The apostle James gives us the same view of religion, though in a different manner of expression; *Pure religion and undefiled before God even the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world* †: the world

* Tit. ii. 12.

† Jam. i. 27.

contains temptations to vice, and it presents opportunities of doing good in all the ways of virtuous exertion; both occur at all times and in all conditions; and pure religion consists in guarding against the former, and embracing and improving the latter, whenever they occur. When our Saviour was most solicitous for the happiness of his disciples; when he had the most immediate view of the dangers to which they were exposed in a world that *hated them*, as it had *before hated him* *, when he declared that they were *not of the world* †; even then he said to his Father, *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil* ‡. It was by being sent forth into the world, and acting in it, that they could be useful, and that they could become happy.

THE example of our Saviour, as well as the intimations of scripture, sets religion in this point of view. Through all the early part of his life, he laboured in Joseph's vocation, as a carpenter: he left it not till the season came when he was called to enter on another vocation, inconsistent with it, and which required all his time. Even after that, he still lived in the world, mixed in society,

* John xvii. 24.

† Ver. 16.

‡ Ver. 15.

conversed

conversed with men, *was in all points tempted like as we are* *; and in this situation continued to be *without sin* †, exhibited an example of every virtue in perfection, and by that example shewed mankind, in what manner religion should exert itself in the several occurrences of common life. It is for the same purpose, that the lives and actions of good men are recorded in scripture; it is to let us see, how they exercised their religion in the scenes of action and in secular employment: and the wisdom of God, by delivering a great part of the scripture in the form of history, has provided for recording so great a number and variety of examples, that in them we may observe the operation of religion in almost every possible condition and juncture of human life. If you be not religious and virtuous in active life, in whatever station you fill, in whatever occupation you follow, it is your own fault, not the fault of your situation: religion and virtue may be incorporated: with the business of every lawful calling; these have actually been incorporated together in the practice of many of your fellow-men. The spirit of true religion, and the spirit of worldly business, are not repugnant, like a drop of water and a drop of oil, which repel

* Gal. ii. 20.

† Heb. iv. 16.

each other, and refuse to mingle; they may be rendered like two drops of mercury, which run together and form one drop. The improvement and happiness of our souls is most effectually promoted when all our worldly occupations are rendered subservient to it: our present interests will likewise be best secured when all our endeavours after them are regulated by religion and virtue.

WHEN the boundaries between religion and ordinary life are misplaced, both must be unduly contracted. They are not like two territories separated by a precise limit, but like territories which, besides the parts that lie in this manner distinct, have many fields in common, or connected by mutual servitudes, so that they can be cultivated and improved only by united efforts. It is sometimes said, that God has reserved the Lord's day for himself and his service, and that he has given us the other six days of the week for ourselves. This manner of speaking is inaccurate, and has too much a tendency to disguise the connexion between religion and common life. The Lord's day, God has in some sense reserved peculiarly to himself; on it we ought to abstain from our worldly occupations: but its exercises are not unrelated to these occupations, they are designed to prepare us for the right and virtuous

ous management of them, and should be performed with this view. The other six days, God has allowed us for our worldly occupations; but not exclusively of serving him; for in these very occupations we ought to serve God every hour of all the six days. We do serve him in them, whenever we carry them on in a virtuous manner. By thus carrying them on, we promote our salvation, though we should not at all times explicitly intend to promote it by them. But it will render our worldly occupations the more subservient to our salvation, for it will contribute to our practising them aright, that throughout the whole course of them we preserve a solicitude for our salvation, and frequently exert actual desires of promoting it by means of the labours of our station. Thus shall we be possessed of an habitual good intention; thus shall we apply a good intention to our most indifferent actions, and direct them all to laudable and worthy ends.

SOME have apologized for the multiplication of ceremonies in religion, by asserting that this multiplies the opportunities of serving God, and the means of promoting our salvation. The apology is frivolous: the observance of ceremonies is neither serving God nor a means of our salvation, except the cere-

monies be of divine appointment; and if they were, yet still the multiplication of ceremonies, would multiply our dangers of neglecting his will and falling into sin, would increase the difficulty of religion, would render many things necessary which might have been safely omitted if God had not required them by positive precepts, and would thus prove a snare to our souls. But the ordinary actions of life must necessarily be done: and by setting ourselves to do them all with a regard to God, and with a view to the improvement and salvation of our souls, we shall, without incurring any new danger or inconvenience, multiply the means of our salvation, increase the number of our virtues, and avoid many vices: we shall render our whole existence one continued act of goodness, religion, and obedience; and we shall be, in all the situations and occurrences of life, pleasing to him whom we are made to please, and in pleasing whom our happiness consists.

To conclude, we are at present in a state of discipline for eternity: every event, every circumstance of this state gives us opportunity for the practice of some virtue; and it is by acting virtuously in every circumstance of this state, that we can be improved in holiness, and become fit for heaven. Our commonest ac-

tions are those in which we think religion least concerned, and on which we are apt to bestow the least attention : but of our commonest actions we ought rather to take the greatest care ; for they are most frequently repeated ; they will therefore form the strongest habits ; they will most promote our improvement and our happiness, if they be constantly performed right ; but they will most obstruct it, if we indulge ourselves in a custom of performing them wrong.

S E R M O N

47
Serm. II. In the ordinary life
there are those in which we think relation
half concerned, and on which we are to
follow the last attention: one of our own
interests, we ought to take the
greatest care; for they are most frequently re-
peated; they will therefore form the strongest
habits; they will most powerfully con-
firm and our feelings, if they be carefully
performed; but they will most easily
if we have the control in a system of per-
forming them wrong.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

JUSTICE THE DECORUM OF THE
CHARACTER OF JUDGES.

PREACHED AT THE ASSIZES.

DEUT. xvi. 20.

That which is altogether just shalt thou follow.

THE duties which are incumbent upon us, may be very properly divided into two classes; such as are incumbent upon all men, and such as are incumbent upon particular ranks of men.

IN some instances, the duties of the latter kind are totally distinct from those of the former kind. Peculiar circumstances in the situation of certain classes of men, give them opportunities for the exercise of particular virtues, and the practice of particular duties, for which there is no scope in other situations. Thus the duties of submission are incumbent only upon subjects, not at all upon the su-

D

preme

preme magistrates: and on the other hand, all the virtues which regard the exercise of civil authority, are peculiar to the rulers of nations; private persons have no opportunity of practising them.

BUT in most cases, the duties of the man, and the duties of the man of a certain character, are in some measure coincident. Our duties are always correspondent to our situations: but the situations of all men agree in many of the most important particulars, and therefore give all men opportunities for the practice of many of the most important duties. All the great instances of piety, charity, justice, and temperance, are indispensibly incumbent on every one that is born of a woman, on the magistrate and the subject, on the minister and the people, on the high and the low, on the rich and the poor, on the old and the young. But still the situation of every class contains some peculiar circumstances, which render several duties of universal obligation peculiarly incumbent on persons of that class, either laying them under special obligations to them, or requiring particular exercises of them. Such duties may justly be considered as peculiar duties of that station which in this manner demands them. It were easy to multiply examples: the text affords one. All men should be

be just; the obligation of justice is absolutely indispensable; the violation of it exposes a man to detestation and infamy: yet even this virtue, whose obligation is to all men so sacred and inviolable, is declared to be peculiarly the duty of rulers: God had said to Moses, *Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes*; he had declared what should be their business, *They shall judge the people with just judgment*: then addressing each of them, as if they had been already appointed to the office, he cautions them against the common perversion of justice, *Thou shalt not wrest judgment, thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift*; and to intimate the great importance of justice in their public character, he repeats the charge to practise it, in the text, *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow*. In the original, the manner of expression is emphatical, *thou shalt practise strict justice, thou shalt practise justice diligently, thou shalt practise justice constantly*. The scripture contains many similar injunctions.

THE *general* duties of men are, for obvious reasons, the most frequent subjects of discourses from the pulpit. But the practice of those duties which are *peculiarly* incumbent on particular classes of men, is often of as great im-

portance to their own character and to the interests of society, and as necessary for their obtaining the approbation of God, as the practice of their general duties; and failures in what belongs to our distinguishing rank and profession, are as great blemishes, are attended with as pernicious consequences, and will be as severely punished by God, as any other vices. They likewise are, on this account, very proper subjects of discourse, especially when suitable occasions invite us to the consideration of them. In this latter case, the address is more confined than in the former: but the very same principles which render it, at all times, fit to inculcate the general doctrines and duties of Christianity, even on those whose abilities and advantages enable them to acquire the knowledge of them for themselves, render it likewise not improper for us, at some times, to remind part of the audience, of what they already know to be specially incumbent upon them. The present occasion, then, will give a propriety to our endeavouring to shew, That strict and inflexible justice is peculiarly the virtue of all judges, magistrates, and rulers, and to point out the reasons why this virtue constitutes the immediate decorum of their character.

IN

SERM. III. *of the Character of Judges.* 53

IN order to accomplish this design, it will be sufficient to observe, That justice is immediately connected with the end of their office ; That they have opportunities for peculiar exertions of justice ; and, That they lye under peculiar obligations to it.

FIRST, JUSTICE is immediately connected with the end of that office which magistrates, judges, and rulers bear.

EVERY station, even the lowest, requires some peculiar duties from those who occupy it ; for every station contains some circumstances peculiar to itself, and is designed to answer some useful purpose, which cannot be answered without observing certain congruous rules. The mechanic must perform some things, not required from other men, in order to render his occupation as useful to society as it ought to be. By failing to perform these things, he becomes faulty in his own trade. To be faulty in one's own trade, is, in the sense of every man, to be doubly faulty : but in the meaner professions, it does not engage our attention much, because their ends are not of distinguished importance.

THE higher employments, as well as the lower, are directly calculated for certain ends,

to promote which certain virtues are peculiarly requisite. To fail in the exercise of these virtues defeats the very end of the office, and is inconsistent with its functions. The higher offices in society are instituted for momentous ends; the defeating of these ends produces great and extensive mischiefs; and therefore the vices which defeat them, are, in men who hold these offices, regarded with singular abhorrence. The dignity of the office, and the importance of its end, mix with our sentiments, excite a sense of absolute impropriety and indecency in the vices directly subversive of it, and make us consider the opposite virtues in a peculiar point of view, with a particular modification of our approbation, as constituting the decorum of character in men of that profession. Every profession of public importance in society, has a correspondent decorum of character belonging to it; and this decorum always consists in the possession of those virtues which are most essentially necessary for the right exercise of that profession. By other virtues, men *adorn* their calling; but the virtues which form its proper decorum, they must cultivate in order to avoid *disgracing* it.

OF all the virtues, justice is the most intimately necessary for performing the functions,
and

and answering the end of the judge's office.—All virtue properly belongs to him: it becomes the man who is exalted above others by his rank, authority, or power, to be *more excellent than his neighbour* *; and universal virtue is the true excellence of man. Every vice is base, and introduces some degree of meanness into the character: but every sort of meanness is unsuitable to those persons whose rank inspires respect, whose authority is the object of veneration, and cannot be supported without properly affecting the opinions and sentiments of those who are subject to it.—Many particular virtues are, in different respects, peculiarly necessary to the support of the authority of rulers, and to the right performance of the duties of their station; and the opposite vices obstruct this end, and are, for that reason, unseemly in the ruler.—Temperance, self-government, sedate recollection of soul, correctness and dignity of conduct, become rulers; levity, dissipation, gait, or giddiness of demeanour, love of pleasure, and every sensual excess, misbecome them: those virtues are suitable, and these vices perfectly unsuitable, to the elevation of their rank, to the gravity of their character, to the solemnity of their office, to the intention and application of mind

* Prov. xii. 26.

which it requires. The littleness of these vices, joined with the idea of men who represent the public, and ought to sustain its honour, forms an incongruous mixture, which is necessarily ungraceful, and cannot fail to give disgust to the spectator.—In like manner, piety is a becoming ingredient in the character, and an indispensable duty of the station of those to whom any part of the government is committed; and every kind and degree of impiety is unfit and unbecoming in them. They are the guardians of the peace and order of society, and consequently ought to be the guardians and friends of religion, without which that peace and order cannot be preserved. Their rank will give force to an example of piety exhibited by them, and by rendering the practice of it more general among their inferiors, they will multiply those blessings which religion confers upon society. Religion will be the most powerful principle of that impartial and steady justice which society has a right to expect from its judges: an inward temper of fervent piety will set God continually before them, in the very light in which the Psalmist represents him, *standing in the congregation of the mighty, judging among the Gods*, saying to them, *Judge not unjustly, accept not the persons of the wicked; defend the poor and fatherless,*

do

*do justice to the afflicted and needy, deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked**.—Thus again, avarice is very incongruous to the character of a judge; its meanness debases and degrades him: but its incongruity arises principally from its being very strongly repugnant to the end of his office, and very directly inconsistent with that justice which is his immediate duty: its demands, allowed to mingle with the functions of his office, could not fail to sophisticate them all; *for a gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous**. A freedom from the sordid degrees of avarice is necessary to preserve a judge from being always suspected of corruption, from actually becoming corrupt whenever a bribe is in his power, and from appearing infamous on that account. A soul *hating covetousness*†, full of generosity, superior to all the allurements of riches, is necessary for giving his character the proper elevation, for securing him against all danger of corruption, and for establishing a general confidence in his integrity.—But still even these virtues are more *indirectly* subservient to the end of the judge's office, than justice is. Other virtues promote that end by the intervention of something else, to which they contribute; justice promotes it immedi-

* Psal. lxxxii. 1, 2, 3, 4. † Exod. xxiii. 8. ‡ Chap. xviii. 21.

ately, without the intervention of any thing else. The exercise of justice itself, is the proximate means of answering the purposes of government and judgment: one of the principal ways in which other virtues promote these purposes, is, by supporting or contributing to the steady and vigorous exercise of incorruptible justice. Injustice, directly and of itself, defeats these purposes, and is in every instance absolutely inconsistent with them: other vices obstruct them, sometimes very strongly, but always more remotely and indirectly, often by preparing the way to injustice.

IN a word, magistrates and judges are set over men for this very end, to do judgment and justice; as their office is of divine appointment, they are charged to pursue this end, by God himself; every deviation from justice, is perfectly reversing the end of their appointment: justice is therefore their peculiar virtue, the immediate decorum of their character.

SECONDLY, Rulers and judges have, from their office, opportunity for many exertions of justice, wholly peculiar to themselves. On this account also, justice may be considered as in a special manner the virtue of their character and station.

EVERY private person has opportunity for many exertions of the virtue of justice. All the parts of our intercourse with others, give us opportunities for abstaining from hurting them, for rendering every man his due in respect of property, reputation, and honour, for performing promises, for executing faithfully what has been committed to our trust. The uniform practice of these several offices of justice, entitles private persons to the character of just and honest men: a failure in any one of them, would in some measure forfeit that character.

RULERS have, in common with other men, opportunities for all these duties; for their connexions with mankind, by means of outward things, are the same with those of other men. But the most blameless practice of these duties, is not sufficient to constitute a ruler, a just and righteous man. Many other exercises of justice are as indispensibly incumbent upon *him*, as any of these is upon *other* men. To him it belongs, to procure justice for those who cannot procure it to themselves, to execute justice between man and man, and between individuals and society. The poor man, who cannot himself resist the oppression of the great, the peaceable man, who is harassed by the encroachments of the man of violence,

violence, the orphan, whose rights are invaded by him that hath no bowels, claim the protection of the judge, and can obtain redress only by bringing their cause under his cognizance. Differences arising from the ignorance or the self-partiality of persons well disposed, can be determined only by the superior knowledge and unbiaſſed justice of the judge. When individuals are injured, or the public disturbed, by crimes, it is to the integrity of the judge that they must look up for help. It belongs to his office, to determine equally in every case, to vindicate violated rights, to frustrate unrighteous demands, to punish destructive crimes. How extensive, then, is the sphere of *public* justice, which is peculiar to the ruler and the judge? In every instance of public justice, he must make conscience of doing what is right; else he forfeits the character of a just and honest man, in the very same way as another person would forfeit it by being convicted of a transgression of private justice. He must be superior to all influence from the favour or displeasure of men, and from every motive of interest: in his *public* character, he must refuse to feel, what it is amiable to feel and to comply with in *private* life, the suggestions of natural affection, the attractions of blood, the tenderness of friendship, the impulse of gratitude, the emotions
of

of compassion: he must not allow either admiration of a person's general worth, or indignation against his habitual baseness, sentiments which in ordinary life it is glorious to cherish, to mingle with his decrees: the moment he is seated on his tribunal, he must *know no man after the flesh* *, he must obstinately abstain from considering any man in any other light, but that precise light in which he appears in the present cause. *Ye shall do NO unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the POOR, nor honour the person of the MIGHTY: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour* †. May not that be justly considered as a peculiar virtue of the ruler, for the exercise of which he has so many peculiar occasions?

THIRDLY, *Justice* may be considered as in a peculiar manner belonging to rulers, judges, and magistrates, because they are under peculiar obligations to it.

It will be found on examination that our all-wise Creator has, in forming human nature, enforced every virtue by sanctions whose strength is precisely in proportion to the degree in which that virtue is necessary to human life and so-

* 2 Cor. v. 16.

† Lev. xix. 15.

ciety. Justice is absolutely necessary to the safety of human life, and to the very existence of society; the universal violation of it would multiply positive pains and sufferings upon mankind, and prevent the possibility of their union. Accordingly the practice of justice is secured by the most powerful motives. It is one of those virtues which conscience makes us feel to be of sacred and inviolable obligation: the transgression of it by others, excites our abhorrence and detestation; the consciousness of a transgression of it by ourselves, produces remorse and self-condemnation; in both cases our sentiments are attended with a sense of merited disgrace and punishment.—Different exercises of the same virtue are, in consequence of this constitution of our nature, felt to be more or less strictly obligatory in proportion to the degree of their necessity in human life. All men are indispensably bound to every act of justice that comes within their sphere. But some exercises of justice are more necessary than others, and therefore of stricter obligation. Not to perceive the superiority of their obligation, not to condemn transgressions of them more severely, not to abhor them more violently, not to ascribe to them more atrocious guilt and higher demerit, would demonstrate a perversion of our sentiments, a depravation of our conscience.—The same virtues, and the

SERM. III. *of the Character of Judges.* 63

the same exercises of them, are more essential to the support of society, in some characters than in others: and it is a consequence of the structure of our nature already pointed out, that on the former they are felt, by every uncorrupted heart, to be proportionably more sacredly obligatory.

THESE principles, which have a plain foundation in the constitution of human nature, are sufficient for evincing that magistrates and judges are under peculiar obligations to justice. All injustice is destructive to society; but it is far more destructive when it is practised by rulers, than if it were practised only by private persons. Justice in all men is beneficial to society, but in judges it is more beneficial.

EVERY act of injustice brings positive hurt on the person who is affected by it; but an unjust judgment hurts with the cutting aggravations of its being done under form of law, and of its impeaching the person whom it injures, as if he had been injurious. Private persons are connected only with a few, and therefore only a few can be hurt by their injustice; but the injustice of a judge is of more extensive consequence, it hurts all who are subject to his jurisdiction. Private injustice
may

may be checked or redressed by the righteousness of the judge; but if the judge be unrighteous, by whom shall his injustice be restrained? The danger is so great and so obvious that in every state superior tribunals are appointed for correcting and curbing the injustice of the inferior. But if the supreme tribunal be corrupted, the evil is without a remedy: then the oppressed complain in vain, they sigh in secret, and are afraid to seek redress; then the injured man who had the boldness to seek redress for his violated rights, has the mortification to find the violation ratified, and doubled by his efforts to avoid it; then he who endeavoured to defend himself from a slight wrong, sees his endeavours plunge him into ruin; then *the wicked lifts up his horn on high* *, he ravages at his will, *the land and all its inhabitants thereof are dissolved* †, *the foundations of the earth are out of course* ‡. Even to seek redress against the iniquity of a subordinate judge, is often grievous; the weak may be crushed, the poor may be beggared by the injustice of the meanest magistrate; they are unable to prosecute their cause, though it be unquestionably good; they must sit down ruined, that they may avoid deeper ruin. The very suspicion of injustice in judges, is of per-

* Psal. lxxv. 4, 5.

† Verf. 3.

‡ Psal. lxxxii. 5.

SERM. III. *of the Character of Judges.* 65

nicious consequence: it deprives men of that sense of security, which is necessary to the comfort of life, and is one of happiest effects of a free constitution of government; it fills them with habitual apprehension that their most perfect rights may be invaded; it makes them dread to vindicate them when they are invaded; it dejects and torments their souls with all those terrors which are incident to the subjects of despotism; it impresses them with the gloomy idea that all things are precarious. Say every feeling heart, are not the uncertainties, the anxieties, the perplexities of this situation real and grievous sufferings?

JUSTICE is of the greatest advantage, as well as of the utmost necessity, to society. The universal practice of it is one of the leading features in the fiction of the golden age; the happiness of that period, the poets place principally in this, that crimes and injuries were unknown. The imperfection and depravity of mankind render it impossible that that fiction should be realized. Incorruptible justice in all the rulers of a nation, puts society in the state which approaches nearest to it. In that state, injuries may be done, but they meet with quick and certain redress; crimes may be committed, but they pass not with impunity, though they should be committed

E

by

by the greatest: every person feels that all his rights are safe, that if they be attacked by the wickedness of individuals, they will be protected by the integrity of the judge; the sense of this security keeps every heart at ease, marks every face with serenity, and fills every life with comfort.—If then the necessity and the essential utility of a virtue, be the measure of the strictness of its obligation, what obligation can be stricter than the obligation of rulers to be just?

JUSTICE is incumbent on private persons only by virtue of its own obligation; yet on them it is indispensibly incumbent: it is incumbent on judges by the same obligation; but on them it is incumbent also by other obligations. It is incumbent by the obligation of fidelity: the execution of justice is a trust committed to them. It is, in effect, the positive charge of society to every judge, nay, it is the express charge of God himself to every judge when divine providence raises him to his office, *Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment: wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with the Lord, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts*.* Thus shall ye do

• 1 Chron. xix. 6, 7.

SERM. III. *of the Character of Judges.* 67

in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart *. By the acceptance of their office, they tacitly, but very solemnly, pledge their faith to God and to society, that they will *bear the causes between their brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother* †. Should they *respect persons in judgment* ‡; or *pervert equity* ||, they would be guilty of falsehood and treachery, as well as of injustice.

THE actual sentiments of mankind own the conclusion, that justice is of peculiar obligation upon judges, and confirm the reasoning by which we have evinced it. Justice uncorrupted, and even unsuspected, is deemed so essential to the character of a judge, that a person who disregarded any of its private offices, would, by the universal voice of mankind, be pronounced for that reason unfit to sustain the character of a judge. In a judge, every species of fraud and injustice would be declared more unsuitable; more atrocious, more inexcusable, than in another. Were his private justice perfectly unblamable, habitual unrighteousness in his judicial capacity would blast his reputation; a single instance of wilful unrighteousness would indelibly fix some stain

* 2 Chron. xix. 9. † Deut. i. 16. ‡ Jer. 17. || Mic. iii. 9.

upon his name. The terrors of his power, or respect for his rank and office, may move men to condemn in silence, and to behave with great external deference, and may hinder him from discovering how low he stands in the estimation of the worthy: but they cannot suppress the sentiments of the honest heart: even respect for the office changes its nature, and, instead of communicating itself to the person who holds it, inflames our indignation against him for abusing and disgracing it. Former ages have afforded instances of judges notoriously arbitrary and unjust: they were abhorred by their contemporaries; and the impartiality of history has stigmatized them, I may say, with deeper infamy than the vilest criminal that ever they condemned. There have been periods when such judges have been sought for, supported, and encouraged, by the tyranny of governors, or by the factious madness of the people: but these periods are and ever will be branded as the most disgraceful and infamous periods in the history of human society.

If now, my brethren, it has been proved, that justice is the immediate and proximate instrument of accomplishing the very end of the office of rulers, magistrates, and judges, that they alone have opportunity for many important

SERM. III. *of the Character of Judges.* 69

tant exercises of justice,—and that they lie under peculiar obligations to it,—may we not fairly conclude, that justice is peculiarly their virtue, the immediate, the proper, the most indispensable decorum of their character? If this maxim be just, the consequence is obvious and undeniable, that all magistrates and judges ought to adhere to justice with perfect inflexibility, and to practice it with the utmost diligence, and the most scrupulous exactness. This consequence demands not the attention only of a few. It fixes the duty, not only of perpetual judges, nor only of temporary magistrates, but also of all who are of juries in public trials, or arbitrators in private differences. Every man may be, most men actually actually are, sometimes in a situation where justice is, in the peculiar manner that has been described, incumbent on them: whenever they are, they render themselves base, if they allow their justice to be biassed.

88

31102

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

S E R M O N IV.

THE FIRST PROMISE OF THE REDEEMER.

GEN. iii. 15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

THE prophecy contained in these words, is the first opening of Christianity, the first intimation of the Messiah, the first promise of redemption to fallen mankind. It is on this account remarkable. It is remarkable also in respect of its occasion, and of the manner in which it was pronounced.

GOD created our first parents in perfect innocence, and designed them for immortality. The same goodness which determined him to create them, and to give them so noble a nature, disposed him likewise to make ample

provision for their support and their comfort. He placed them in the garden of Eden, which his own hand had adorned, and in which he had planted *every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food* *. He gave them liberty to feast on all the variety of fruits which it contained: and, for trial of their obedience, forbade the fruit of only one tree in the midst of the garden, but forbade them that, with this express threatening, *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die* †. Unthankful for the abundance which God had allowed them, regardless of his prohibition, unawed by his threatening, first Eve solicited by the serpent, and next Adam seduced by his wife, did eat the one forbidden kind of fruit.

THAT it was the devil, who tempted Eve, is acknowledged by all. It is the general opinion, either that he entered into one of the serpents of the field, actuated its body, gave it speech, and made it his instrument in the temptation; or else that he assumed the form of one of them, and appeared in its likeness. Had either of these been the case, Eve could scarcely have failed to be surprised and terrified: the serpents of the field were familiar to her; when she heard one of them speaking,

* Gen. ii. 9.

† Ver. 17.

and speaking rationally, she would have immediately run away, and knowing him to be only one of the brutes, she would not have easily allowed herself to be by him persuaded out of her obedience to God.

SOME are therefore of opinion, that the devil did not, on this occasion, either employ any of the brute serpents, or appear in the form of any of them. That he did, seems indeed to be implied in the words with which the history is introduced, *Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field**. But it seems to be implied in them only as they stand in our translation: the original may with equal propriety be rendered, *Now there was a serpent more subtle than any beast, or than all the beasts of the field†*: not one of the beasts

* Gen. iii. 1. † As the words taken by themselves bear this translation, so their construction with the sequel, seems to require it. If we follow the common version, by the serpent who was thus subtle, we must understand the serpentine kind in general, and then the next verb *וַיֹּאמֶר* will have no nominative: *And he said unto the woman, Yea hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* Who said this to the woman? Not surely the serpentine kind in general; but it alone had been mentioned before. It must have been some one individual serpent that said so; but no such had been so much as hinted at. Accordingly they who follow this interpretation are forced to allow an ellipsis of the nominative, making Moses to say, "The serpentine kind was more subtle than any beast of the field, and the devil, speaking out of (or assuming the form of) one individual of that kind, said unto the woman;" &c. This is extremely harsh and violent.

of the field, but a being far more intelligent than any of them, than of them all together, a being of an higher order, the devil. In the account of the creation which Moses had before given, he had no occasion to mention the devil: but being now to relate a transaction in which the devil was the first mover, he very properly introduces it with an intimation, that there is such a being as the devil. But why does he call the devil a serpent, if he neither assumed the form of one, nor used one as his instrument? He might very properly call him a serpent, without any regard to his form, on account of his subtlety. It is common to express a rational being by the name of some animal to whose qualities his disposition bears a resemblance; there are instances of it in parts of scripture not the most figurative*; the serpent has been considered in all ages as an emblem of malice and of cunning; the scripture insinuates this very reason for giving the name to the devil; he is *that old serpent called the devil and Satan, which DECEIVETH the whole world*†. He might be called a serpent, likewise, on account of his own angelic form. All the names of intellectual things and spiritual beings are figurative, being taken from those material and sensible things which bear

* Mat. iii. 7. xii. 34. xxiii. 33. Luke iii. 7. xiii. 32. 2 Tim. iv. 17.
 † Rev. xii. 9.

an analogy to them. Seraphs were supposed to resemble the winged fiery serpent in their form, and had their name from them, on account of this resemblance: the *fiery serpents* which *the Lord sent among the people* of Israel in the wilderness, are called *serpents seraphim* *; and the *serpent of brass* made by Moses on that occasion, is called simply a *seraph* †. The devil probably appeared to Eve in the form of a seraph, she took him for an angel of light, conversed with him as such, and therefore listened to him without surprize, without suspicion, and was easily persuaded by him. It was this serpent, metaphorically so called, that tempted Eve: it is this one individual serpent, the devil, not the whole serpentine kind, nor any particular species of it, that is spoken of through the whole of this history. This supposition agrees perfectly with the whole tenour of the history, and clears it from many difficulties in which the other suppositions have involved it,

Soon after our first parents had sinned, they heard the voice of Jehovah ‡. They had often heard it; and always hitherto it had been pleasant to them. But now it was terrible; they endeavoured to hide themselves,

* רִמְמִים שְׂרָפִים Num. xxi. 6. † שֶׂרָף ver. 3. ‡ Gen. iii. 8.

God found them out, and extorted a confession from them, that they had disobeyed their maker. First Adam owned that he had eaten, but accused the woman of having given him the fruit. Next Eve confessed that she had eaten, but laid the blame upon the serpent: *the serpent*, that serpent, probably pointing to him, or casting her eye upon him, *beguiled me, and I did eat* *. This serpent, the tempter, was present: either detained by the power of God; or of choice, exulting in his success, eager to overhear the doom of the deluded pair, to enjoy his victory, and to triumph over them.

BEHOLD now God appearing in the Schechinah! the two apostate parents of the human race, and the Seraph who had tempted them to apostacy, stand before him. He sits in judgment, and passes a separate sentence upon each. He passes sentence first upon the Tempter †. This was fit in order to check his exultation: it made him feel that, in reducing them to misery, he had reduced himself to greater misery. If we consider the sentence as passed on the brute serpents, it is trifling and liable to endless difficulties: but if we consider it as respecting only the devil,

* Ver. 9---13.

† Ver. 14, 15.

it has great propriety and dignity, and every part of it is expressed with very striking beauty. He appeared now, as he had appeared while tempting Eve, in the seraphic form; and all the expressions used in the judgment pronounced against him, have a double reference to that seraphic form, and to the serpentine form which it resembles. *And the Lord God said unto the serpent*; not unto the serpents of the field, but unto the serpent who now stood before him, the same individual being who is spoken of through the whole history: to him solely, the whole sentence is directed, without the most distant intimation that any part of it regarded the serpents of the field. *Because thou hast done this; Thou*; not a brute serpent; a brute serpent neither did, nor could have done it; but the one seraphic serpent the devil; he it was who had beguiled Eve. Therefore, says God, *Thou*, the same individual serpent, the devil, *art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field*: thou art devoted to a punishment which, far superior as thine original nature was to theirs, shall render thee more vile, abject, and miserable, than the meanest of the brutes, more an object of God's displeasure, and of the hatred of all good beings, than any other creature is. *Upon thy belly shalt thou go*: this is not meant against the brute serpents; it is not true of
all

all of them, for flying serpents, it is said, continued to exist after this ; of the other serpents it would have been impertinent, for to them going on their bellies was essential from the creation. It was directed only to the seducer ; and, if it be explained according to the usage of scripture stile, it will appear in respect of him to have great truth and propriety. It was directed to him in his seraphic form, which resembled the serpentine ; the manner of expression is chosen with a view to that resemblance, and intimates his punishment in allusion to it ; it intimates that he was now as much degraded as if his seraphic form were converted into that of a groveling serpent, as if from flying on high, he were reduced to creep upon his belly. This figurative expression, at least one perfectly similar to it, is used elsewhere in scripture, and had become proverbial, to signify a reduction to the lowest affliction and humiliation : it is very deep affliction which the Psalmist intends to describe, when he says, *Our soul is bowed down to the dust, our belly cleaveth unto the earth* * ; it is what in the preceding verses he had called, *affliction, oppression, being killed all day long, counted as sheep for the slaughter, cast off by God* †. Its simple meaning in this curse is, Thou shalt be de-

* Psal. xliv. 23.

† Ver. 22, 23, 24.

graded from all thine original dignity and celestial glory, thou shalt lose all the prerogatives of thy nature, thou shalt be cast down to shame, and infamy, and reduced to an abject and vile condition. *And dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life*: the meaning is not, Thou shalt feed wholly upon dust, but, Thou shalt lick up dust together with thy food: still the allusion to serpents, whom the devil's seraphic form resembled, is beautifully kept up. But it is not a sentence pronounced against brute serpents; it was true before of them, that they licked up dust along with their food; and this is not peculiar to them, it is common to them with all animals that feed from off the ground. Here too the terms are metaphorical and proverbial; but they are not unusual in scripture; they convey an idea similar to what is expressed in the preceding clause, they contain an amplification of that idea; they signify a state of bondage, captivity, imprisonment, and the lowest depression. It is such a state that Micah means, when he prophesies that *the nations shall lick the dust like a serpent**; it is a state in which they should be confounded†, and move out of their holes like worms out of the earth‡. There is a similar expression in one of the Psalms, *I have eaten ashes like bread*||;

* Chap. vii. 17. † Ver. 16. ‡ Ver. 17. || Psal. cvii. 9.

which,

which from the title of the Psalm, from the occasion to which it is referred, and from many plain descriptions of bondage and distress through the whole of it *, has undeniably the same signification. David prophesying of the Messiah, says *His enemies shall lick the dust* †; and and Isaiah foretells that, in the completion of the Messiah's kingdom, *dust shall be in the serpent's meat* ‡. Both probably had this original curse directly in their eye, and, to intimate that they had purposely retained the metaphorical terms of it, which imply this plain sentiment, That the devil was to be thenceforth in a state of the most abject depression, and the most wretched captivity, groaning under present anguish and overwhelmed with dreadful expectations. In terms therefore metaphorical indeed, but the precise import of which may

* The title is, *A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed.* It is generally considered as a lamentation on account of the miseries of the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. The state lamented under the figurative expression now quoted, is described in other terms answering precisely to our explication of its import; *I am in trouble,---my days are consumed like smok, and my bones are burnt as an hearth; mine heart is smitten and withered like grass;---by reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin;---mine enemies reproach me all the day, and they that are mad against me, are sworn against me;---thou hast cast me down;---the stones of Zion are thrown down, and it is laid in dust: And in giving deliverance, the Lord is represented as regarding the prayer of the destitute---hearing the groaning of the prisoner, and loosing those that are appointed to die.*

† Psal. lxxii. 9.

‡ Chap. lxx. 25.

be

be ascertained by the scripture language in other passages, the Tempter is sentenced to a state of miserable degradation and bondage; to the very state which Peter describes in plainer terms, in terms extremely unlike to those used in this sentence, but surprisingly synonymous with them, *God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment* *.

So far the sentence was absolute; it expressed simply the condition to which the Tempter was instantly degraded. The remaining part of it is expressive of the condition of the devil in relation to mankind. In expressing it God introduced a promise comfort-

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. This passage is an exact commentary on the words of Moses, corresponding to them, clause to clause. Moses describes the Tempter as a superior intelligence, and intimates that he appeared in the form of a Seraph: Peter speaks of *angels*. Moses says that God pronounced the Tempter *curst above all cattle, and above every beast of the field*; Peter says, *God spared not the angels*, that is, he treated them with severity, and inflicted a heavy punishment upon them. Moses says, *Upon thy belly shalt thou go, thou art cast down into the lowest humiliation and affliction*: Peter says, *He cast them down into hell*. Moses says, *Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life*, words which imply abject bondage and captivity: Peter explains them in this very sense, *He delivered them into chains of darkness*. Peter intimates that even this was not properly their state of punishment, but that they are *reserved unto judgment*: Moses hints not at this in the first part of the sentence; but he does intimate it in the latter part, when he speaks of *bruising the Serpent's head*.

able to man: this was great kindness to our first parents; by this their fears were alleviated, and a beam of consolation was darted into their guilty hearts, before themselves were sentenced to sorrow, labour, and mortality. It is contained in the text; *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

WHEN this promise was first delivered, it was, no doubt, only like *a light that shineth in a dark place**: it was just sufficient to relieve the thickness of the gloom, to let in a twinkling ray of hope, to give an indefinite conception of some comfortable and happy event, a conception analogous to the indistinct view of bodies in a glimmering light. Our first parents would naturally conclude from this promise, That the devil's malicious designs against them, were to be in a great measure defeated; but they had not a full conception either of the extent and consequences of his designs, or of the nature and manner of the promised deliverance from them. The promise was, however, admirably adapted to the circumstances of his temptation, and to the apprehensions which they could not fail to entertain. He hoped,

* 2 Pet. i. 19.

perhaps,

perhaps, by deceiving the woman, to bring on them immediate death, and extinguish the whole species at once, and they would readily fear this: but God promises that the woman shall have seed. The devil had deceived her under the specious pretence of friendship, and expected to have gained her wholly and firmly to espouse his cause and interests: but war is proclaimed between him and his seed, and the woman and her seed. He had intended the utter ruin of mankind, and rejoiced in the thought that he had accomplished it: but it is declared that he had accomplished his own destruction, and that, though he should have some success in the combat, its issue should be much more fatal to himself than to his adversary. The import of this promise has been illustrated by posterior prophecies, and still more by the event, so that it is made to shine to us like *the day-star*. With regard both to the succeeding prophecies, and the descriptions of the event, some are expressed in terms similar to those used here, on purpose to show that they belong to the same subject; and others are expressed in very different terms, either in proper words or in dissimilar metaphors, that by comparing them all together, we may the better apprehend the precise meaning of all the terms, and understand the whole subject more perfectly. Examined by this light, the text will be found not only to con-

tain a promise of the Redeemer, which is commonly observed in it, but also, which is not so commonly observed, to represent in brief, but with great exactness, the whole religious and moral state of this world; from the fall of man to the consummation of all things.

IN what remains of this discourse, I shall illustrate the several particulars of this promise; and then make some reflections on it.

FIRST, It is here intimated that the woman should have seed; and it is intimated in such a manner as to imply an accurate prediction of the miraculous birth of the Redeemer.

OUR first parents probably apprehended, and the Tempter hoped, that God would condemn them to immediate death. While they were trembling under this apprehension, they hear God declare that the woman shall have seed: this was comfortable to them; it implied that their lives were to be prolonged. At the time, they would perhaps conceive these words to mean only any descendant from them. That Eve expected the person thus promised, in Cain her eldest son, is by some thought to be intimated by what she said at his birth, which they render, *I have gotten a man, the Lord**.

Lord *. It was even merciful in God to give them only an obscure and general intimation of the great Deliverer: had they known that he was not to appear till after so many ages, it might have sunk them in dejection.

BUT however obscure their conception of him may have been, this intimation is very precise; it is an exact description of a wonderful event, of the extraordinary and miraculous conception of the Saviour of mankind. The posterity is always reckoned after the man; this expression, *the seed of the woman*, is without a parallel in scripture; the most learned Jews hold it to be wholly unaccountable. But *their minds* are, as the apostle affirms †, *blinded*, and there is *a veil upon their hearts, in the reading of the old testament*; else, singular as the expression is, it needed not appear inexplicable to them: for they have in their own scriptures, a prediction expressed indeed in different words, but which in sense perfectly coincides with it, and explains it. *Behold*, says Isaiah ‡, *a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son*. That person who was born of a virgin is with the strictest propriety called *the seed of the woman*; he is, what no other ever was or shall be, the seed of the woman only, not of the man.

* Gen. iv. 1.

† 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

‡ Chap. vii. 14.

The expression would indeed be improper and inexplicable, if there were not such an event corresponding to it; and if there be such an event, this singular expression was doubtless chosen on purpose to mark its peculiarity.

It is in the gospel that we find that wonderful event. Jesus of Nazareth was born of the virgin Mary, having been conceived of the Holy Ghost. Matthew mentions this*. Luke gives a particular account of it†. Paul takes notice of it in terms which point out Jesus as the person designed in this first prophecy: *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son made of a woman*‡. He had no father but God: God himself, by his own immediate operation, as the psalmist had foretold, *prepared a body* for him||. This event, absolutely singular, without a parallel, was, in terms which exactly suit it, foretold four thousand years before it happened, in the very infancy of the world, to the first human pair.

SECONDLY, It is foretold in this prediction, that there should be a perpetual opposition between this person and the devil. Satan was already the declared enemy of mankind;

* Chap. i. 23, 26. † Chap. i. 26. 38. ‡ Gal. iv. 4. || Heb. x. 5.

and one born of a woman is, by the appointment of God himself, to enter the lists with him, and war against him. *I will put enmity, says God, between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.* Satan probably hoped that the matter was absolutely determined, and our first parents finally and irretrievably ruined, by the overthrow which he had already given them; and they feared that it was so: it must have yielded them some comfort, even to know that there was still room for a contest.

THESE words are addressed to the same serpent who had been spoken of all along. Being thus addressed to one, they cannot refer to all the brute serpents. They refer not to any of them; there is no greater antipathy between mankind and them, than between mankind and all other frightful and destructive animals: and it is, not mankind, but Christ Jesus, that is here principally intended. The devil who had deceived Eve, the prince of the apostate spirits, is the serpent here meant. By his seed, we must understand such progeny as an angel can have. His seed denotes primarily the evil spirits who were partakers in his apostasy, or his followers in defection from God. It includes also wicked men: they are corrupted by his temptation, they are

formed by his influence, and they bear his image; and on this account they are in scripture called *the children of the devil*, and as such opposed to good men, who are named *the children of God* *. These are the parties on one side of this contest.

THE parties on the other side are *the woman and her seed*. It is Jesus Christ who is meant by *the seed* of the woman; the manner of expression points to him; he is the principal in this opposition to the devil. The woman herself is also mentioned: Eve could never certainly think without detestation of the devil, who had so maliciously deceived her. But by the woman is not meant Eve alone; Christ was not the seed of Eve exclusive of Adam; his virgin mother was equally descended from them both. The woman is not mentioned here, because she was to bear any peculiar enmity to Satan; her enmity is common to all of her posterity who resemble her in detesting the devil and his works: but she is mentioned, because it was she that had been deceived by Satan, and, perhaps chiefly, to give occasion for predicting him who was peculiarly *the seed of the woman*: accordingly in the following clauses, the mention of the wo-

* 1 John iii. 9, 10.

man is entirely dropt, and only her seed spoken of. Good men are indeed, under Christ, engaged in this contest; but their being engaged in it, is not directly intimated by the expressions here used; it is only remotely and by a metonymy implied, as they may be considered, according to the representations of scripture in other places, as members of Christ, and fighting in his strength.

It is here foretold then, that there would be a perpetual and irreconcilable opposition between the devil, evil spirits, and wicked men on the one hand, and Christ on the other hand. From the moment of the fall, it has been so, in every sense in which the prediction can be understood.

In the strictest sense, it intimates a *personal* contest between these parties; and in this sense it was literally fulfilled. Devils and wicked men have from the beginning exerted themselves in propagating idolatry and vice, and overwhelming the world with misery. That the Son of God was personally engaged, even before his incarnation, in counteracting their designs, there are many hints in scripture; his *goings forth have been from of old, from the days of the age; and he continued to give them until the time that she who was a-
bearing*

bearing bad borne *. But after she had borne, after the Son of God had become the seed of the woman, there was a personal contest in the properest sense. The devil himself tempted Christ in the wilderness; and by his instruments he laboured incessantly to defeat his views, to raise prejudices against his person, his doctrine, his actions, and his miracles. Herod endeavoured to murder him in his infancy. The Jews persecuted him all his days, and at last crucified him. In so doing, they showed that they were, as our Saviour on this very account calls them, *serpents* †, *a generation of vipers* ‡, of their father the devil ||: they did his works, and they were instigated by him. By the same instigation Judas betrayed Christ to death; Satan had *entered into him* §, and moved him to it. On the other hand, Jesus Christ resisted the devil, and, during the whole of his life in the flesh, opposed his designs and interests, casting out unclean spirits, healing those diseases which sin had brought into the world, combating the vices of wicked men, and, till his hour was come, eluding and defeating their malicious attempts against himself. Since his exaltation he is invisible, but he is represented in scripture as the head of the

* This is the true sense of Mic. v. 2, 3.

† Mat. xxiii. 33. ‡ Mat. iii. 7. xii. 34. Luke iii. 7. || John viii. 44. § Luke xxii. 3. John xiii. 2. 27.

church,

church, constantly employing his power for promoting true religion, virtue, and happiness; and the devil is represented as the ruler of the kingdom of darkness, and, along with wicked men, intent upon, and active in opposing him and promoting the contrary views.

BUT the words of the prediction need not be restricted to such a personal conduct. The devil is here spoken of as the head of the apostasy, who had become a rebel against God, set up a kingdom in direct opposition to God's kingdom, a kingdom of wickedness, and laboured to spread sin and misery; and his offspring are considered as acting under him in carrying on his plan: when these persons are therefore in this way mentioned, the cause in which they are engaged may, by a very common figure, be understood. Christ is here predicted precisely as the Head of man's recovery: from the moment of the fall, he was, by divine appointment, the governor of God's kingdom here below, the kingdom of righteousness and felicity: and therefore, though he alone be mentioned, both they who are the subjects of his kingdom, and the cause which is its great object, may, by the same figure, be intended. By this very figure, all good is ascribed to God, and all evil to the devil: this implies the same idea which we suppose in the text;
and

and this is the common language of scripture. These two kingdoms, the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God of which Christ is the immediate governour, are contrary and irreconcilable in every point, in their natures, in their views, and in the principles which their respective votaries act upon. It is here predicted, That neither of the two should absolutely prevail in the present world, that there should be a perpetual struggle between them. The prediction has been precisely accomplished. It is an exact description of the present mixed state of things, in which good and evil, virtue and vice, happiness and misery, though in different proportions, yet still are blended together, and counteract each other.

It has been accomplished in the character and condition of every individual of the human race. Every human character is imperfect and mixed. Since the fall there has not been a single mere man either uniformly good or uniformly bad. The worst men are not wholly destitute of all good qualities, and the best are not altogether free from vice. In some men, very great virtues have been united with very great vices. In the wicked sin is predominant, and goodness in the righteous; and some waver so irresolutely between the two,

or seem to possess them in such equal degrees, that it is hard to say to which class they belong. In every man, there is *a law in the members, warring against the law of the mind* *; in every man, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other* †. Conscience and good affections oppose corrupt appetites and passions, and are opposed by them; they instigate us by turns. The condition of every man is mixed. Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity are mingled in his cup. The sufferings of some, and the enjoyments of others are great and many: but none ever passed his life either in pure happiness, or in unallayed misery.

It has been accomplished likewise in the general state of the world. In all ages and nations there has been a mixture of good and bad men, united in the same societies, in the same families, but pursuing opposite plans of conduct; to both there has often been *one event, and all things have come alike to all* ‡. In some parts of the world, idolatry and corruption have prevailed; in others, true religion has been established, and has produced considerable effects. The vices and the preju-

* Rom. vii. 23.

† Gal. v. 17.

‡ Ecclef. ix. 2.

VICES of men oppose the prevalence of truth and goodness; and these in their turn check vice and error. The wicked hate the righteous, lay snares for their virtue, and study to afflict them; the righteous is *clean contrary to their doings, he was made to reprove their thoughts* *. In every period of society, these things have taken place; in the most uncultivated nations, there have appeared virtues, rough but bold and active; the civilization of mankind, while it refines their virtues, too often likewise multiplies their vices, and introduces new species of corruption. In the early ages, the piety of the patriarchs formed a contrast to the depravity of the generations in which they lived, and maintained a struggle with it. The old world was *corrupt before God* †: Noah alone was a *preacher of righteousness* ‡, and *condemned the world* ||. In Sodom, *just Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked* §; and *he seemed to them as one that mocked* **. In the heathen world, a few disapproved, and in some instances opposed the general corruption; but they were baffled by its power. The Israelites enjoyed a true religion: but idolatry overspread the rest of the world; and upon themselves, that true religion had not universal or constant influence.

* Wisdom. ii. 12, 14.
xi. 7. § 2 Pet. ii. 7.

† Gen. vi. 11.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 5.

|| Heb.

** Gen. xix. 14.

Good men were raised up to reprove their defections: but they were disregarded and persecuted by those who would not be reclaimed. Even the full erection of the kingdom of the Redeemer, in the gospel dispensation, has not annihilated this promiscuous state of things. Hell and earth, devils and wicked men, both Jews and heathens united their efforts to prevent the reception of the gospel, and to persecute all who preached or professed it; and since it was established, the cunning of the enemy, and the ignorance and ill designs of men have conspired to fully its beauty, to enervate its power, and to defeat its success, by adulterating and corrupting it, by traducing and maltreating its genuine adherents, and by promoting infidelity and irreligion. But by the favour of divine Providence, by the invincible, but efficacious exercise of that power which is committed to Jesus Christ, and by the undaunted fortitude and the indefatigable labours of the apostles and other good men, the gospel met with an extensive reception, gave a check to false religion and evil practices, and has since then been always in some degree retained, has been at times reformed from corruptions, has had some good influence on the general state of the world, and has rendered many truly virtuous and holy. Christianity is wholly calculated for
opposing

opposing vice and promoting purity and goodness; and as long as there is wickedness in the world, it will prompt men to resist this holy religion: *every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved**. Righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial are as contrary and irreconcilable as *light and darkness*†; and, like these, they divide this world between them.

SUCH is and always has been the actual state of this lower world: that this would be its state, was predicted in the very beginning of the world. The scripture always supposes this to be the state of the world, and often expresses it in terms which correspond to those of this prediction, and point it out as the fulfillment of it. To the eye of sense, men are the only actors in the scene; but the scripture constantly represents it as carried on likewise by invisible actors. The scripture considers this world in the precise light of its being God's world, and governed by him; and both the predictions of the old testament, and the history of the new, represent the government of it as committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the virtues of good men as supported by

* John iii. 20. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

him. The scripture represents the devil as opposing the laws and the interests of the kingdom of God and of Christ, as seducing wicked men and making them his willing instruments in promoting his designs, as corrupting the church by *sowing tares* *, as tempting and afflicting good men. It therefore calls him *the enemy* †, the *adversary*, and describes him *as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour* ‡: and good men, while endeavouring to avoid vice and adhere to truth and goodness, it represents as *resisting the devil* ||, *standing against his wiles*, and *wrestling not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* §.

Two other particulars are here foretold, That the issue of this contest shall be fatal to the devil and his cause, and That he shall notwithstanding have some successes in the course of it. These particulars shall be considered afterwards. In the mean time, brethren, since the present life of good men is such a warfare, *take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye*

* Matt. xiii. 25. 39. † Ib. and ver. 28. Luke x. 19. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 8. || Ver. 9. Jam. iv. 7. § Eph. vi. 11, 12.

98 The first Promise of the Redeemer. SERM. IV.

may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand *. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might †.

* Eph. vi. 13. † Ver. 10.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

THE FIRST PROMISE OF THE REDEEMER.

GEN. iii. 15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

FOR understanding the meaning of this prediction, and perceiving its accomplishment, it is necessary to know, to whom the sentence of which it is a part, was addressed, and against whom it was pronounced. The preceding discourse was, therefore, introduced by showing, That it regards, not the brute serpents, neither the whole kind, nor any particular species of them, but solely the devil, who had tempted Eve, and who is called the serpent on account of his malicious cunning, and probably too on account of his own serpentine form. It is thought to have resembled the serpentine; and, if it did, it gave a natural

occasion both for the name by which the devil is here mentioned, and for the metaphorical expressions employed in the sentence pronounced against him.

THE first part of that sentence intimates the condition to which the devil was immediately condemned, and, in metaphorical but expressive terms, describes it as abject, vile, and miserable. The second part of it declares what would thenceforth be the condition of the devil in relation to mankind; and it contains a prophetic delineation, general, but very precise, of the religious and moral state of this lower world, from the fall of man to the consummation of all things. It is delivered in these words, *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* The particulars of this prediction are four; I proposed to explain them in their order.

FIRST, It is here intimated that our first parents, instead of being subjected to immediate death, should have posterity: the expression *the seed of the woman* runs through all the clauses of the text; and it is an expression which naturally implies the miraculous conception of the great Deliverer, which points to, and had an exact completion in Jesus Christ,

Christ, who being born of the virgin Mary, was the seed of the woman only, not of the man,

SECONDLY, It is here declared that there would be a perpetual opposition between the promised Deliverer of mankind, and the devil, who had seduced them into apostasy: *I will put enmity, says God, between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.* These words may signify a personal contest between that Deliverer on the one hand, and evil spirits and wicked men on the other; and such a contest there was, especially after that Deliverer had become *the seed of the woman*, in the days of Christ's flesh. The words may likewise signify a struggle between the two opposite causes, the cause of virtue and happiness, of which Christ is by God's appointment the head, and the cause of wickedness and misery, which is patronised by the devil, and espoused by vicious men. Considered in this light, they contain an accurate description of the mixt state of things, which has actually taken place in this lower world, ever since the fall. Virtues and vices, good and bad qualities, are united in the character, and pleasures and pains, enjoyments and sufferings, are blended in the condition of every individual of the human species. In every age, in every nation, in every

every society, good and bad men live promiscuously together, sharing in the same blessings, involved in the same calamities, but actuated by opposite principles, and engaged in contrary courses. I formerly explained these two parts of the prediction.

THIRDLY, We are here assured that the issue of this contest shall be fatal to the devil and his cause.

THIS part of the prediction is expressed in terms which might agree to the brute serpents; *It, the seed of the woman, shall bruise thy head.* But it refers not to them: to have foretold that men should now and then kill a serpent by crushing its head, would have been trivial and unworthy of the occasion. It has a much more important meaning. The terms are only borrowed from brute serpents, to be metaphorically applied to the seraph who had beguiled Eve. The metaphor is perspicuous and strong. It is in the head of the serpent that its poison lies; and the crushing of its head immediately and most certainly kills it. The figurative expression here used has, therefore, this plain meaning; That the descendant of the woman, now promised, shall obtain a complete victory over the devil, deprive him of his power to hurt, abolish his dominion and influence, and finally punish and destroy him.

HE had succeeded in deceiving the woman; she now appeared weak and wretched in his eyes: but this very woman, it is foretold, shall be his destruction; from her a person is to spring, who shall reduce him to greater weakness and deeper wretchedness. He had hoped to become absolute lord of this lower world: but, as it was declared in the preceding clause, that his usurped dominion over it would be always incomplete, it is here foretold that this dominion shall be at last totally overthrown. Our first parents could not but understand his designs against them, so far as to perceive that he had seduced them into sin, and that he had intended to subject them to death, and to deprive them of the happiness for which they were made. When, therefore, his destruction, by means of the woman's seed, was predicted, they must have seen that the prediction implied an assurance, that his malicious contrivances against mankind would be defeated, their sin forgiven, and themselves delivered from death and restored to happiness. It led them to expect a redeemer in human nature, who would recover them from that state into which, through the temptation of the devil, they had fallen.

THIS part of the prediction has not received its full accomplishment: it regards the final issue of the contest proclaimed in the

preceding clause, and which was to continue through the whole of the present state: till that contest, therefore, be concluded, till the present state of things come to an end, the accomplishment of this promise must remain incomplete. But it has been already fulfilled in some part; it is fulfilled in every advantage which Christ obtains over the devil, and in every advantage which the cause of virtue gains over the cause of vice: so far it is illustrated by the event. At the same time, in other passages of scripture, we have many descriptions of the issue of that contest, and of the manner in which it shall be brought about, which render this first intimation of it much clearer to us, than it could be to our first parents. Some of these descriptions are expressed in so plain an allusion to the text, as to direct us to regard the subject of them as intended by it, and fulfilling it; and others are expressed in terms fit for throwing light on those which are employed here, and rendering their meaning easily intelligible.

GOD promises that in the *personal* contest, which had been just now foretold between Christ on the one side, and devils and wicked men on the other side, Christ should have the advantage, and at last obtain a complete victory.—Already he hath had

had great advantage. In every assault which the devil made upon him personally, in his state of incarnation, Christ was conqueror. When the devil tempted him, he baffled all his temptations. He cast multitudes of devils out of those who were possessed by them; and gave his disciples also power to cast them out in his name; thus depriving evil spirits of their dominion over mankind, and rendering them subservient to the glory of his miracles. In reference to this kind of miracles he says, *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven* *. The terms in which he expresses the powers granted to his disciples, are remarkably analogous to those of the text, and point out these miracles as fulfilments of it, *Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you* †. These miracles are represented also as a *binding* of Satan ‡. When Christ appeared, demoniacs seem to have been very common; if at that period they had been more common than before, it would have been taken notice of with surprize: since that time it is certain that they have been much less frequent; this is an instance in which Christ has given a signal check to the power of Satan. In spite of all opposition, Christ finished the

* Luke x. 18. † Ver. 19. ‡ Mat. xii. 29. Mark iii. 27.

work given him to do on earth; he adhered to truth and goodness to the end: and when he died a martyr to them, he triumphed over the devil and all his agents, by rising again from the dead, and ascending into heaven. His ascension, the scripture assures us, was the celebration of his triumph, his accession to the kingdom here foretold. It assures us that, *when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive* *; that *having by his cross spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly triumphing over them* †; and that he is *set at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come* ‡.—But it is at the end of the world, that Christ's victory will be complete. The preceding verse described the devil's present state; this clause foretells his final punishment, even that judgment to which Peter and Jude inform us that the fallen angels are reserved ||. It will be such as comes up to the full import of bruising the serpent's head. At the end of the world, Christ will appear in the glorious character of the universal judge, and will condemn the devils to perdition. He will cast them, says John, *into*

* Eph. iv. 8.

† Col. ii. 14, 15.

‡ Eph. i. 20, 21.

|| 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

*the lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever *.* Then too the judge will condemn all wicked men, who have suffered themselves to be corrupted by the devil, and have co-operated with him in his cause, to the same punishment with him; he will send them *away into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels **, where they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power †.

God here foretells likewise, That the cause of Christ, the cause of truth and righteousness, shall all along gain some advantages over the opposite cause of Satan, the cause of idolatry and vice, and shall finally triumph over it.—In conformity to this prediction, idolatry and ignorance of God have never prevailed so universally, but that some faint rays of religious knowledge have now and then shone forth in one part of the world or another. When they were too weak to lead men off from the practices of false religion, they notwithstanding often exposed its absurdity, and subjected it to just contempt. Some of the Pagans condemned the worship with which they complied; others acted a better part than was con-

* Rev. xx. 10.

† Mat. xxv. 41.

‡ 2 Thess. i. 9.

sistent with the religion which they professed. The idolatry of the ancient world was the worship of evil spirits and wicked men; *the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and not to God**: the religion of Christ banished this idolatry; wherever it was embraced, it turned men *to God from idols, to serve the living and true God †*. This was, to lay waste the kingdom of the devil, and withdraw his subjects from their allegiance to him: the scripture represents it in this very light; it represents those gentiles who were converted by the gospel, as *turned from the power of Satan unto God ‡*. It is probably the establishment of Christianity on the ruins of Pagan idolatry, which John foresaw in prophetic vision, and which he describes in metaphors like to those employed in the text; *There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom*

* 1 Cor. x. 20.

† 1 Thess. i. 9.

‡ Act. xxvi. 18.

of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night: and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony *. Even in the Christian church, indeed, Satan has introduced idolatry: agreeably to the prediction of the apostle Paul, *the man of sin has been revealed, the son of perdition, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness* †. But the same apostle foretells, that this wicked one, *the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming* ‡. As yet the prediction is not accomplished fully: but the accomplishment is far advanced; a reformation from Popery has spread over many nations; where the form of Popery is still retained, a great part of its power is lost. In due time the apostle's oracle shall be completely verified by the total abolition of idolatry from the Christian church: the period foreseen by John shall come, when it shall be proclaimed, *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her* ||.

* Rev. xii. 7---11.

† 2 Thess. ii. 3, 9. 10.

‡ Ver. 8.

|| Rev. xviii. 2. 3.

CHRIST'S victory over the devil, implies also the prevalence of virtue over vice. This cannot generally take place in the present state; it had been already foretold that the present state would be always mixt. Yet in many particular instances virtue has prevailed. In all ages there have been many good men; and in every good man, virtue is predominant. Integrity has often triumphed over all the cunning and all the contrivances of wickedness. It is the very design of the coming and the religion of Christ, to promote virtue and discourage vice; *ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins* †. Sin is the work of the devil; he it was who introduced sin into the world; and *for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil* †. By his religion, multitudes have been recovered out of the snare of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will*. There seem to be intimations in the scripture, that the religion of Christ shall, in some future periods, exert its power more perfectly and more universally, and produce far more conspicuous effects. In the course of Christ's reign, an angel is represented by the prophetical evangelist, as coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in

† 1 John iii. 5.

† Ver. 8.

* 2 Tim. ii 26.

his hand, and laying hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and binding him a thousand years, and casting him into the bottomless pit, and shutting him up, and setting a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled †. This doubtless implies some great restraint which shall at some time hereafter, even within the compass of the present world, be laid upon the power and machinations of the devil. — But we are certain that, at the end of this world, all God's elect shall be gathered together †, the living changed ||, and the dead raised, perfect and immortal. Then shall they be delivered from all the consequences of the fall, from sin, and guilt, and the grave, and shall reign in life by Jesus Christ *. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory ††. Then death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire ††, to be there consumed. Then there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness |||. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain §. And there shall be no more curse, but the servants of God and of the Lamb shall reign for ever and ever **. By this ex-

† Rev. xx. 1, 2, 3. † Mat. xxiv. 31. Mark xiii. 27. || 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. * Rom. v. 17. †† 1 Cor. xv. 54. †† Rev. xx. 14. ||| 2 Pet. iii. 13. § Rev. xxi. 4. ** Chap. xxii. 3, 5.

tirpation of sin, and death, and misery, the devil's contrivances against mankind shall be finally defeated. We are assured that the early prediction shall be thus fulfilled, for it is written, *That Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet* *.

FOURTHLY, It is foretold in the text, that, though the seed of the woman should finally destroy the serpent and his seed, yet they would have some lesser successes against him and his cause, in the course of the combat.

THIS is foretold in terms which might be applicable to the brute serpent; *thou shalt bruise or bite his heel*. Jacob says with a similar allusion, *Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horses heels* †. This is a manner of attack natural to the serpent, its make scarcely permits its rising higher; and it will very readily bite the heel of him who is crushing its head with his foot. The sentiment is obvious enough, though the terms be figurative. The heel is not a vital part; a wound in it, however painful it may be, is not necessarily mortal; some smaller hurt is therefore inti-

* 1 Cor. xv. 25.

† Gen. xlix. 17.

mated. It is intimated that, in destroying the power of the devil, the seed of the woman should receive a wound, but not a fatal wound, nor one inconsistent with a full victory at last.

THIS part of the prophecy has had its accomplishment, with respect both to Christ himself, and to his cause,

CHRIST himself was far from escaping all hurt in the combat; but the hurt which he received, was such as may be justly represented by the bruising of his heel; it answered not the malicious intention of the devil; it proved not fatal; on the contrary it was the great means of defeating the contrivances of the devil. The sufferings of Christ's incarnate state were manifold and grievous; and he died a painful and ignominious death. It was *by the things which he suffered, that he was made perfect, and became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him**. Even when they nailed him to the cross, they wounded only his mortal part: the divine and spiritual part remained unhurt, and he rose from the dead to eternal life, and glory, and dominion. In his death, his enemies thought

* Heb. v. 8, 9.

that they had vanquished him ; but it was by his death that he completed his victory over them. It was *through death*, that *he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil* *. His death was the sacrifice for our sins, and obtained the remission of them : it was the ransom of our forfeited lives, it reversed the forfeiture by purchasing our resurrection from the dead ; it was the price of our salvation, and bought for us, not immortality on earth, but an immortality of happiness in heaven. It was because he *became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, that *God hath highly exalted him, and given him* † all that authority and power by which he will, at last, totally abolish the dominion of Satan, and condemn him, and all his angels, and all his adherents, to everlasting destruction.

THAT Christ should suffer in obtaining our deliverance from the malice of the devil, is expressly affirmed in the text, and must have been understood, by our first parents, to be implied in it. That his sufferings contributed to our deliverance, that they were an atonement for the sins of the world, is not necessarily implied in this prediction, nor could our first parents learn merely from the expressions

* Heb. ii. 14.

† Phil. ii. 1, 8.

here employed : but even they were perhaps taught to perceive that this also was implied in the prediction. It is probable that animal sacrifices were instituted at this very time * : and if they were, the institution of them would throw light on what is here said, illustrate the nature of the Redeemer's sufferings here foretold, unfold the manner of the redemption of the world, and show that it should be accomplished by the seed of the woman suffering and dying to make atonement for us. While God, in words, promised a suffering Redeemer, he at the same time instituted sacrifice as a type of

* That animal sacrifices were originally of divine institution, has been often asserted, and seems to be proved by many conclusive arguments. Soon after the fall, it is certain they were in use ; Abel offered an animal sacrifice, and was accepted for it ; therefore they had been instituted before that period. But in all the interval, there was no season so proper for the institution, as immediately after the fall, when God appeared to Adam and Eve ; and passed sentence on them. Sacrifice was instituted as the means of obtaining the pardon of sin ; and the first sin had, at that season, been just committed. The lives of our first parents were forfeited by it ; this was the fit time to substitute a sacrifice in their place. The Redeemer was now promised ; what time more proper for the institution of a rite which is confessedly typical of him ? That this was the very time, there is a circumstance in the history, which seems to indicate : just after passing sentence on the first pair, *God clothed them with skins* : it is probable that no animals had died of themselves before the fall ; man got not permission to kill them for food till after the flood ; what then are the skins with which they were clothed, so likely to have been, as the skins of the animals which, at the institution of sacrifice, God had appointed them to kill for the first offering ?

him, to explain the promise, to keep alive the expectation of him, to promote reliance on him through all the ages which divine wisdom had decreed should pass before Christ was actually offered up, to be, in every repetition of it, a standing prophecy of the future redemption, that to this, men, in all succeeding generations, might have recourse by faith, for the remission of their sins. Agreeable to this, is the account which the apostle gives of Abel's sacrifice, the first that is recorded in scripture; *he offered it by faith**, by faith in this promise of a Redeemer, with expectation of, and dependence upon him whom his sacrifice shadowed forth.

AGAINST the *cause* of Christ likewise, the devil often has, and through the whole course of the present state shall continue to have, considerable success; yet only such success as may be represented by the bruising of the heel. In the idolatry of the heathen world, the devil reigned for many ages; in it, he and his angels were worshipped and served as gods; till the coming of Christ, he seemed to carry all before him. Many and gross corruptions have been introduced into the Christian religion, have spread wide, and continued long uncor-

* Heb. xi. 4.

rected: *the son of perdition hath opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God**, and he shall continue to sit for some time longer. In all ages of the world iniquity hath abounded; the wicked have at times been very many, and the righteous very few; in the purest societies and the purest periods, multitudes of bad men have been intermixed with the good; the vicious are often prosperous, and the virtuous depressed. The best of men are imperfect; in particular instances, sin triumphs over all their grace; the most cautious some times give place to the devil †, and he gets an advantage of them ‡. Wicked spirits and wicked men often fill the righteous with sorrows, and expose them to sufferings; *the devil casts them into prison and into tribulation* ||. Satan's first contrivance against mankind, was so far successful, that *in Adam all die* §. But all these successes of Satan in the prevalence of vice and misery, are slight and temporary; they shall not only be reversed at the last, they are always opposed, and often checked in the present state. Pagan idolatry was often exposed, and often reprov'd,

* 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

† Eph. iv. 27.

‡ 2 Cor. ii. 11.

|| Rev. ii. 10.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

and has already been banished from many nations, by the light of the gospel, and shall be banished from many more. Christianity, even when it is corrupted, retaineth force enough to give some check to evil works; when the corruption of it is most general, still some escape being infected; and after an interval, it shines forth again in purity and in power. The good oppose the devices of the wicked, make them ashamed of them, and prevent some part of the mischief which they would otherwise produce. Virtue is sometimes honoured and rewarded even in the present life. In all good men, grace, though sometimes baffled, prevails against corrupt lusts, and gradually mortifies them more and more; they repent of their sins; obtain the forgiveness of them, and become more circumspect and blameless in virtuous practice. When Satan is permitted to afflict them, it is only *that they may be tried* *; when he has *great wrath* against them, it is *because he knoweth that he hath but a short time* †; their sorrows are succeeded by solid and permanent joys, and contribute to them; *the God of peace thus bruises Satan under their feet* ‡. They die not for ever; Christ will raise them up at the last day, to a new and glorious life.

* Rev. ii. 10.

† Chap. xii. 12.

‡ Rom. xvi. 20.

SUCH is the first promise of a Redeemer to the fallen world, delivered in the sentence which God passed on the devil, by whose temptation it had fallen. It is, in the manner of the eastern nations and of the early ages, expressed in figurative terms borrowed from the serpent, for which the tempter's seraphic form gave a natural occasion. But the figurative terms used in it, imply very clearly,—an intimation of the miraculous conception of the Redeemer—a declaration that there should be a stated and permanent opposition between him and the devil, and that in consequence of this the present world should be a mixt and chequered state—an assurance that the Redeemer shall at last obtain a complete victory over the devil, defeat his contrivances against mankind, and make virtue and happiness to triumph for evermore—and a prediction that, in effecting this, he should undergo sufferings and death for us, and be exposed to some lesser hurts in respect of his followers and his cause. What these particulars import, and how they have been accomplished, I have endeavoured to explain.

THE reflexions on this subject, with which I proposed to conclude my discourse, shall be very short.

1. THE whole of this subject shows the greatness of God's grace and kindness to men. Every part of the curse pronounced on the tempter, spoke comfort to our first parents. God gave them this comfort, that they might not despond. He prevented their fear of instant death; he assured them, not only that they should live to have posterity, but that among them there should be one great person, the Redeemer of his race, and that, through him, mankind should at last triumph, and their seducer be utterly destroyed. God suffered not himself to be an object of mere terror to sinful man for a single day: in the very hour of the provocation he allowed not mankind to consider themselves as rejected by him. He gave them hope, that they might have a strong motive to return to him by repentance, and to study to regain his favour. To us, Christians, he has given stronger hope, by a fuller revelation of our redemption already accomplished: in this hope let us rejoice, and let our alacrity in endeavouring to please God, be in proportion to the brightness of our hope.

2. WHAT has been said, may confirm our faith in Christ, and his gospel. The prophecy which we have considered, is an intimation of the most marvellous events: and they

they have come to pass. They are the reverse of what the devil, with all his knowledge, looked for ; and of what, with all his cunning, he intended by his machinations : yet they were exactly foretold in the very beginning of the world. Who could have foreseen them at that time, but God ? They are his appointment. Jesus Christ is the deliverer here predicted ; to him every character of the deliverer belongs : he was born of a virgin ; he is in direct and irreconcilable opposition to the devil and his cause ; he hath already greatly broken the power of Satan, and hath revealed to us in what manner he will totally destroy it ; and he hath suffered and died in accomplishing this great design. On him we may safely depend, as the promised seed, the restorer of the lost world, the conqueror over Satan, sin, and death.

3. WHAT has been said, tends to give us a just conception of the state of things in this present world. It is obviously a mixt and imperfect state, and it has many appearances of irregularity and confusion. In it no character is wholly consistent or of a piece. In it virtuous and vicious men are intermingled, and connected together by many ties. In it neither is virtue uniformly rewarded, nor vice uniformly punished ; in innumerable instances

2

good

good and evil are promiscuously distributed to the righteous and the wicked; and in many instances the wicked flourish and prosper, while the righteous are unsuccessful and afflicted. These appearances of disorder have been remarked in all ages; they have been urged by some as objections against the justice of divine Providence, and they have sometimes perplexed the most modest and serious enquirers into the ways of God. But this very state of things, the text informs us, is the appointment of God himself; in the very beginning of the world, he declared that he had appointed it. Being his appointment, it is unalterable; in vain we fret and murmur at it; his sovereign will demands our submission. Being his appointment, it must be wise, and just, and gracious; the text shows it to be eminently such. It was when the parents of the human race had merited instant death, by which the species must have been totally extirpated, that God appointed this state of things: it was a gracious mitigation of their doom; it should be received by us as a favour and indulgence. It was when our all seemed to be irretrievably lost, that God appointed this state: it is a subject of gratitude and joy, rather than of regret and murmuring; absolute destruction must have been the portion of mankind, if God had not mercifully allowed them a new struggle

struggle against their seducer. The allowance is greatly merciful; by it God gives every individual a new trial, and a trial with the unspeakable advantage of its being under the conduct of the great Deliverer, for immortal happiness and glory. The seeming disorders of the world are but the means of our trial; if we behave aright, they shall contribute to our triumph. Great as they may be, they shall not be perpetual; evil shall be overthrown, good shall prevail; this is not our final state: it shall be succeeded by an everlasting state, in which virtue and felicity shall reign pure and unmixed.

4. BUT let us ever remember that this happy state shall be obtained only by those who belong to the seed of the woman, and that an opposite state of everlasting destruction awaits the serpent and all his seed. All men belong either to the one or to the other. This is the great distinction of mankind. Let us examine carefully, to which class we belong. Are we yet engaged in the apostasy from God? The devil is the head of that apostasy. Are we yet impenitent in sin? Sin is the work of the devil; and they who do his work, are his seed, and shall be destroyed with him. Fly from this misery; abandon sin without delay. Take Christ Jesus for your leader; embrace him

124 *The first Promise of the Redeemer. SERM. V.*

him as your Saviour; practice his religion. Then shall you belong to the promised seed; then shall you be engaged in the cause of God; and then shall you be happy; you shall share with your Redeemer in his triumph; you shall live with him, and reign with him for ever.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

THE PROMISE OF THE REDEEMER TO ABRAHAM.

GEN. xxii. 18.

*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth
be blessed.*

THOUGH Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh, only in the latter times, yet his appearance for the redemption of fallen mankind, was the gracious purpose of God before the world began *: and from the very moment of the fall it was the principal object of divine Providence with regard to mankind, the design to which all the dispensations of his providence were subordinate. Ever since that period, this great scheme of divine love has been steadily kept in the eye of God : to unfold it gradually, a series of prophecies was extended from the fall, through all succeeding

* 2 Tim. i. 9,

ages,

ages, till the time of Malachi the latest of the prophets.

To compare the character, the office, and the actions of Jesus Christ, as represented in the history of the New Testament, with the prophecies concerning him in the Old, must be an employment highly agreeable to every inquisitive person who has a just sense of the importance of the gospel dispensation. It is likewise of great utility; the clearness and fullness of the history removes the obscurity of the prophecies, and the authority of the prophecies confirms our faith in the history.

THE prophecies concerning the Messiah form a connected series. In the occasions and circumstances of delivering them, or in the manner of expressing them, they have such a reference to one another, as shows that they are intended of the same person. Every posterior prophecy bears a relation to those which preceded; in some particulars it alludes to them, it pre-supposes them, and must be explained by them; and in other particulars it gives a new opening into the subject; it renders clear and determinate what in former predictions was obscure and indefinite, or it discovers something concerning the redemption of the world or the character of the Redeemer, of which

which no intimation had been given before. The truth of these observations will appear in explaining the prophecy which the text contains; and for understanding that prophecy it will be useful to keep these observations in mind.

IT is a remarkable prophecy of the Saviour of the world, the promise which God made to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* In this discourse, I shall explain this prophecy, and show that it was accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth,

IT gives intimation of three things :

First, THAT the Redeemer of the world should be the *seed* of Abraham ;

Secondly, THAT his undertaking should be highly beneficial to men, and render them *blessed* ;

Thirdly, THAT the blessings resulting from his undertaking, should not be confined to one nation, but extended to, *all the nations of the earth.*

First, In this prophecy God foretells, that the Redeemer of the world should be the *seed* of Abraham.

IMME-

IMMEDIATELY after the fall, God promised the Redeemer under the title of *the seed of the woman**, here he calls him the seed of Abraham. The similitude of expression was intended to show, that both predictions relate to the same person, that the author of blessedness, now promised to Abraham, is the same with the head of man's recovery, announced to our first parents. In the first promise, the expression *the seed of the woman* intimates the singular manner in which the Redeemer should be conceived and born: the expression here used gives no such intimation; it leaves this character of the Redeemer on the same footing on which that promise had put it; but in the case of Abraham there was something peculiar; Isaac, from whom the Redeemer was to spring, was born miraculously of Sarah after she was in the ordinary course of nature incapable of having a child. This circumstance bore some analogy to the manner of expression in that promise, it was sufficient to keep alive the expectation of an extraordinary birth.

BUT the principal information intended to be given by calling the Redeemer *the seed of Abraham*, was information of the family from which he should spring, information that he should be a descendant of Abraham.

* Gen. iii. 15.

THE expression used in the first promise, *the seed of the woman*, intimated that he should be a Saviour in human nature. No more particular description of him was either necessary or proper at that time, when only the common parents of the human race had yet a being. But in course of time, mankind were multiplied into many families. In which of these might they look for their Redeemer? For their direction in this point, more particular revelations became necessary. After the flood, each of the three sons of Noah was to be the progenitor of many nations. In foretelling the state of their posterity, by inspiration, Noah says, *God shall enlarge Japheth, and, or but he shall dwell in the tents of Shem**. By many, the latter clause is referred not to Japheth, but to God, and is understood as an intimation that the promised Redeemer should be of the posterity of Shem; an intimation which, in the form of expression, bears a great analogy to the evangelist's description of that Redeemer, *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, the original imports, tabernacled or pitched his tent, among us*†.

BUT Shem had many sons, and from each of them descended many nations. It soon

* Gen. ix. 27.

† John i. 14.

I

became

became necessary to point out, from which of these the Saviour should spring. For this purpose God called Abraham from his own country into the land of Canaan: he promised this land as a temporal inheritance to his posterity; and at the same time informed him, that the Redeemer should spring from him, *In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed* *. Abraham understood not this to mean, that himself was the appointed Saviour, but only that this Saviour should be one of his posterity; accordingly it is recorded to his honour, that, while he had yet no child, *he believed God* †. When Isaac was promised, intimation was also given, that he was the son of Abraham, with whom God would *establish his covenant* ‡: after his birth, the intimation was repeated, *In Isaac shall thy SEED be called* ||: and when Abraham had approved his faith, by obeying God's command to offer Isaac, the grand promise was explicitly renewed, and ratified by the oath of God, in the words of my text, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*.

THESE predictions not only determine the Redeemer to be one from among the posterity of Abraham, but also intimate that he should

* Gen. xii. 3. † Chap. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3. 6. ‡ Gen. Gal. xvii. 19, 21. || Chap. xxi. 12.

be of his posterity by Isaac: and to Isaac himself the promise was afterwards repeated in the very same words which are employed in the text †. Abraham not only had before now Ishmael by Hagar, but also was afterwards to have several children by Keturah: but mankind are directed to look for their Redeemer, only among the posterity of Isaac. To render the direction still more determinate, after Isaac had two sons, from whom distinct nations were to spring, God said to Jacob the younger of them, *In thee, and in thy seed shall all the families of earth be blessed* *: as, in the pursuance of the same intention, Jacob was made, in his dying words, to restrict the origin of the Redeemer to the tribe of Judah, and the spirit of revelation in after times still farther restricted it to the family of David, and likewise unfolded by degrees many particulars relating to the place, and other circumstances of his birth.

To ascertain and limit, in this manner, the expectation of the Redeemer from time to time, was every way worthy of the divine wisdom.—It was necessary for preserving the expectation of this great person in the world. In the family of Abraham alone, the expectation was preserved: the rest of mankind, degenerating

† Chap. xxvi. 4

* Chap xxviii. 14.

basely from true religion, very soon forgot the the primeval revelation, and lost all expectation of the Saviour. In the other branches even of the family of Abraham and of Isaac, the promise made to them was quickly forgotten; it was remembered only in the line of Jacob, from which it had been intimated that he was to spring, and to which predictions of him were frequently repeated.

THE determination of the Redeemer's origin was also of great importance both for setting aside the pretensions of impostors, and for giving evidence to the true Redeemer when he should arise. In vain would any person of other nations have claimed this character: the Redeemer must be of the posterity of Abraham by Isaac and by Jacob. By this single mark, Mahomet is convicted as a cheat: but in Jesus, whom we embrace as our Redeemer, this is accomplished. To these Patriarchs, the evangelists trace up his genealogy by both his parents; and to the promise and oath made to Abraham, the New Testament frequently refers. In course of time, multitudes of circumstances relating to him, were foretold; and as the predictions of him became more complex, in the very same proportion, the application of them became the simpler and the more infallible. They were rendered so circumstantial before prophecy ceased,

ceased, that they could not possibly all agree to any person except him who was intended in them: but various, minute, and circumstantial as they were, they all agreed with the most punctual exactness, to Jesus of Nazareth; and thus demonstrated, That he was the great Deliverer promised from the beginning of the world, and, through all successive ages, invariably kept in the eye of Providence, and gradually revealed to men

SECONDLY, It is foretold in the text, that the undertaking of the person here promised, should be highly beneficial to mankind.

IN him, God says that men *shall be blessed*. The original may mean, *shall bless themselves*: in this sense the Jews understand it, and explain the import of the promise to be, That they who wanted to express the best wishes to another, would pray, May it be to thee as to Abraham. To confirm this sense of the expression, it is observed, that Isaac, in blessing Jacob, says, *God Almighty give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee* *; and that Jacob having said to the sons of Joseph, *In thee shall Israel bless*, explains it to this very sense, by adding, *saying God make*

* Gen. xxviii. 3, 4.

thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh *. But in this latter passage, the manner of expression is not precisely the same as in the text; and the form of benediction recorded in the former passage, rather took its occasion from the promise made to Abraham, than expressed the full sense of it; it pre-supposes that blessings were promised to him, and its import depends on what these blessings were. The text is a part of that promise; and its simplest meaning is, That by the Redeemer who was to spring from Abraham, the nations should be rendered happy.

THE expression is general, it determines not the kind or degree of happiness which the Redeemer would confer upon mankind; yet Abraham could not be at a loss to discern this. The promise made to our first parents was in this respect more explicit; the effect of the Redeemer's enterprize was expressed more definitely; it was intimated that he would *bruise the serpent's head*: and this, from the circumstances in which that promise was given, could not but be understood by them to imply, that he would obtain a complete victory over the devil, defeat his designs against mankind, recover them from the sin and guilt into which

* Gen. xlviii. 20.

he had seduced them, and restore them to that life and happiness from which they had fallen by his suggestion : and in this sense they would explain it to their posterity. Abraham was acquainted with this first promise ; he could not but recollect it on this occasion ; and by its more precise terms he would define and limit the general expression of *blessedness*, used in the new promise made to himself. He would understand, not merely that from this promised seed the nations should receive great benefits, but also that he should be the author of all those particular benefits which are implied in bruising the serpent's head. It would readily be understood in the same sense in after ages ; by posterior predictions, the nature of these benefits was more distinctly unfolded : but it is in the New Testament, in the history of the great Deliverer now actually come, that we may learn the full import of the blessedness promised through him ; and with a plain and designed reference to this very promise, the benefits derived to us from Jesus Christ, are often mentioned in the New Testament.

OF him before he was born, Zacharias prophesied, when he was filled with the Holy Ghost, as the great person of whom *God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began*, and particularly as

the person appointed to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham: and in his prophecy described the blessings to be conferred by him, as consisting in our being saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us, in his granting unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives; in his giving knowledge of salvation to his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace *. The apostle Peter having reminded the Jews, that they were the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed, thus describes the fulfilment of the promise, in manifest allusion to the terms of it, Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to BLESS you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities †. The apostle Paul calls the Christian salvation the blessing of Abraham, and under this name de-

* Luke i. 70---79.

† Acts iii. 25, 26.

scribes it as including Christ's *redeeming us from the curse of the law*, and our *receiving the promise of the Spirit through faith, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance* *. To Abraham God promised, that in his seed the nations should be *blessed*; and the apostle testifies that *in Christ God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places* †.

THE promise gave room to expect blessings great and manifold: but all the blessings which men could beforehand conceive to be included in it, or even in the more particular prophecies that followed, the apostle justly observes, are far exceeded by the blessings which, the gospel assures us, are actually purchased for us by Jesus Christ: *Eye, says he, hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit* ‡. All the means of necessary knowledge and of holiness, divine illumination, strength and assistance, the forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, the resurrection from the dead, and the everlasting happiness of heaven; these are the blessings which Christ confers: and they are blessings the greatest in themselves, and the most suitable

* Gal. iii. 13, 14, 15. iv. 5. † Eph. i. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

to ignorant, weak, corrupt, guilty, and mortal creatures. Of him who confers them, it might be foretold with the greatest reason, that in him men should be blessed.

IN the first promise it had been intimated that, in conquering Satan, the Redeemer should be a sufferer; it had been said, *Thou shalt bruise his heel*. In the text it is only said that *in him*, that is, by means of him, the blessing should come: but in what particular way he should procure it, the words give no intimation. They were connected, however, with a very remarkable event. God had commanded Abraham, *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering* *. Abraham had set out, and, on the third day of his journey, was just preparing to obey the hard command, when the angel of the Lord stopped his uplifted hand, preserved his son, and provided another sacrifice. In approbation and reward of this instance of faith and obedience, the promise in the text was given, and confirmed by an oath. It is commonly allowed, that that whole transaction was intended to give Abraham information of the death and sacrifice of the Redeemer, and was understood by him to typify and prefigure

* Gen. xxii. 2.

these ;

these: there is reason for allowing it. But whether in that transaction Abraham perceived the sacrifice of Christ, or not; whether they who lived before Christ's appearance, apprehended its meaning so far as to learn from it, that he was to die a sacrifice, or not; yet we who live after the event, can by its light perceive and do know that the whole transaction was a type of the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ. To us it is a proof, that this method of redemption was foreseen and foreordained by God. Between Abraham, at God's command, offering Isaac, the son whom he loved, in sacrifice, and God giving his only begotten and well-beloved son to be a sacrifice for our sins; between God's requiring Isaac, the very heir of the promise, the first born of the covenant, to be offered, and his requiring Jesus Christ, the great subject of that promise, the head of the covenant, to be made a propitiation for the sins of the world; the similitude and correspondence is so perfect as to leave no room for our doubting that the one was intended to be prophetic of the other. The conformity between the types under the Old Testament, and the events of the New, happened not by chance; but was purposely contrived to shew us Christians, that the grand design of man's redemption which we see now accomplished, was ever in the view of God, was always carrying on,
and

and ran through all the dispensations of revealed religion. Abraham with-held not Isaac, his son, his only son; and God *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all* *. The sufferings to which he delivered him up, and by which he made *the atonement* †, were clearly foretold in the course of the prophecies: and in the New Testament we have the history of the sufferings which Jesus underwent, and descriptions of the efficacy of his sacrifice, exactly agreeable to the prophecies.

THIRDLY, It is foretold in the text, that the blessings in this manner purchased by the Redeemer, should extend to all nations.

IN the first promise this was not expressed; it was not necessary; the first parents of the whole human race were alike connected with all the kindreds of their posterity. But now, when one nation was pointed out, from which the Redeemer was to spring, there was great need to give intimation that he was not intended for the benefit of that nation only, but of all nations. This was the more necessary because, along with the promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that the Redeemer was to spring from them, there was

* Rom. viii. 32.

† Chap. v. 12.

constantly

constantly a promise also given them, of a temporal inheritance, of the land of Canaan *, which was peculiar to their posterity, and in which other nations had no interest. This might have led them to interpret the promise of the Saviour, as likewise peculiar to themselves. Their establishment in the land of Canaan was made subservient to the great design of the redemption of the world, by preserving among them the knowledge of the one true God, and by giving scope to a long series of prophecies concerning that dispensation of his grace. Finding themselves in this manner selected by God, and privileged above other nations, they would the more readily conclude, that the Redeemer was designed for them alone. For preventing the mistake, this early intimation that he was to be the Saviour of all nations, was highly proper: by many succeeding prophecies the same information was inculcated upon them. All this did not prevent their falling into the mistake; but it rendered it inexcusable.

BEFORE the Saviour came, they had persuaded themselves, in opposition to the information of all the prophets, that he was to be the temporal deliverer only of their nation. Had

* Gen. xii. 1, 2. xv. 13---21. xvii. 8. xxii. 17. xxvi. 3, 4. xxviii. 13, 14, 15.

Jesus Christ been an impostor, he would have accommodated his pretensions to their conceptions; indeed he must have been under the same prejudice; it could never have entered into his thoughts to form a design totally repugnant to the notions which so universally and so deeply possessed all his countrymen. He shewed himself to be no impostor, he shewed himself to be the promised Redeemer, by the very pretensions which he made. To the contracted notions of the Jews, they were diametrically opposite; but they agreed exactly to the declarations of the prophets, and fulfilled them. He appeared, not as the deliverer of the Jews, but as the Saviour of the world: the angels proclaimed his birth to be *good tidings of great joy, which should be unto all people**: in his life-time, he gave many intimations that he was intended for all nations: and after his resurrection, he expressly commanded his disciples to *go into all the world, teach all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature†*. They did so: their own minds were purified from the prejudices of their nation; they saw that the gentiles as well as the Jews had access to salvation and blessedness by faith in Jesus Christ; they *perceived of a truth, that God is no respecter of persons, but in EVERY NATION he*

* Luke ii. 10.

† Mark xvi. 15. Matt. xxviii. 19.

that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him *; they proclaimed that there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him †. The narrow-minded Jews found fault. But the apostles withstood them, confuted them from the prophets, and oftener than once confuted them from this very promise made to Abraham, which, they informed them, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith ‡. Know ye therefore, says Paul, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham: And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed: So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham §. The blessing of Abraham hath come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ §. The covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect **. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise ††.

* Aq. x. 34, 35. † Rom. x. 12. ‡ Chap. iv. 13. § Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9. § Ver. 14. ** Ver. 17. †† Ver. 29.

IT was observed before, that the text may be rendered, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves.* But rendered in this manner, it implies a far more important sense than that which the Jews would give it; it foretells, that the nations should acknowledge that in this seed alone they can be happy; it foretells the actual reception of the Redeemer by all nations. This also is verified in Jesus Christ. In him the nations blessed themselves, much more than the Jews, who claimed the Messiah as altogether their own. Only a few of the Jews in comparison believed on him; while the bulk of them rejected him, multitudes of the gentiles received his gospel. While the Jews, the natural and immediate heirs of promise, the descendants of his own ancestors, are outcasts from his kingdom, it is established in many nations in all the quarters of the world. Already the prophecy is so far accomplished, as to give us ground of assurance that in due time it will have its full completion, by all the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ *. This day is this prophecy, brethren, fulfilled in ourselves. We are by nature gentiles, *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of pro-*

* Rev. xi. 15.

mise: But now, in Christ Jesus, we who some-time were as far off, are brought nigh, and are made fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, fellow-heirs, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. This very day, we sit here assembled, acknowledging the Redeemer as already come, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world†. And if our acknowledgment be sincere, if we heartily accept the redemption which he hath wrought, and comply with the religion which he hath taught us, in him we shall be blessed for evermore, being set down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven‡.*

THUS, my brethren, I have shewn you the meaning of this prophesy, and its accomplishment. And now what are we to learn from the whole?

1. SHALL we not be inexcusable, if we receive not the Saviour who is so carefully pointed out to us? Every prophesy in the Old Testament, accomplished under the New, is a proof of the divinity of both; it shews that they have the same author, and that he is the God who is perfect in knowledge, in whose eyes

* Eph. iii. 12, 13. 19. iii. 6. † Tim. iii. 16. ‡ Matt. viii. 11.

the future is even as the present. In Jesus, this very early prophecy was exactly fulfilled. Abraham had no child when this promise was first made to him, nor was there, in the ordinary course of nature, a possibility of his having one: yet he *believed God*: *Against hope he believed in hope*; and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform*. He believed in circumstances, if possible, still more difficult: when he was tried, he offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, *That in Isaac shall thy seed be called*; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure†. When we are commanded to believe in Jesus Christ, how much less is required of us, than Abraham performed? To us, the Redeemer is not promised, but shewn already come; to us, he is not darkly intimated, but clearly manifested; he was precisely marked by the prophets of all ages; he was pointed out by the finger of the Baptist;

* Rom. iv. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

† Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

he approved himself the true Saviour, by fulfilling in himself, all that had been before written concerning him, *God also bearing him witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles* *. Such fulness of evidence leaves no excuse for unbelief. *Be not ye, brethren, faithless, but believing †, walking in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham ‡.*

2. How great is our danger, if we reject a Saviour whose undertaking is so important in the eye of God? The salvation of mankind by Jesus Christ, is so important that it has been the object of God's attention, complacence, and delight, through all the ages of the world. All his revelations to mankind, the separation of the Israelites, and the whole plan of their religion, point to this as their great end. The information of it, which the text contains, was given to Abraham, as a suitable reward for the highest instance of his obedience. All this sets its importance in the strongest light; it represents it as, what our Saviour calls it, *the counsel of God*, the final result of the deliberations of perfect wisdom. The Jews *rejected this counsel of God against themselves* ||. It was a most atrocious crime: it was to baffle all the contrivances of divine

* Heb. ii. 4. † John xx. 27. ‡ Rom. iv. 12. || Luke vii. 30.

wisdom and love for their good. The restoration of mankind from ignorance, corruption, guilt, death, and misery, to knowledge, purity, favour, immortality, and happiness, is the object of the Redeemer's undertaking. It must be the ultimate end of all the dispensations of Providence relative to mankind. It is the grandest design in which they can be interested. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation * ?* Of what punishment shall we not justly be thought worthy? *Knowing the terrors of the Lord †, let us be persuaded to seek the favour of God, through Jesus Christ, in whom he is well-pleased ‡.*

3. WITH what gratitude and joy should we embrace the Saviour who is revealed to us, accept the salvation which he has purchased, and perform the terms on which he offers it! *Abraham laughed ||, when Isaac was promised to him. He rejoiced, says our Saviour, to see my day; and he saw it and was glad §.* How much more should we be glad? Abraham saw the day of Christ but faintly, and at a distance; we see it already risen, and sit under the full light of it. The blessings of God's covenant were only hinted to him; but to us they are fully displayed. If he rejoiced because to

* Heb. ii. 3. † 2 Cor. v. 11. ‡ Mat. iii. 17. || Gen. xvii. 17. § John viii. 56.

him the promise was made, ought not we much more to rejoice when to us the promise is performed? We are not the children of Abraham according to the flesh: yet we are made, by the kindness of God, the children of the promise. To us it hath been said, *Rejoice ye gentiles, with his people* *; among us are *preached the unsearchable riches of Christ* †. Let us be thankful for this grace, let us cheerfully improve it, let us perform with alacrity whatever is necessary for our obtaining everlasting happiness through Jesus Christ.

• Deut. xxxii. 43. Rom. xv. 10. † Eph. iii. 8.

that the promise was made, ought not we
much more to rejoice when as the promise
is performed? We are not the children of
Abraham according to the flesh: yet we are
made by the kindness of God, the children
of the promise. For as it hath been said.
Rejoice ye greatly, since ye have obtained the
promise, as ye have obtained the promise of God:
Let us be thankful for this grace, let us cheer-
fully improve it, let us persevere with anxiety
whenever is necessary for the obtaining ever-
lasting happiness through Jesus Christ.

STERNON

S E R M O N VII.

CONSTANCY IN RELIGION ENFORCED BY
THE COMMON SUFFERINGS OF HUMAN
LIFE.

I COR. x. 13.

*There bath no temptation taken you, but such as
is common to man.*

FROM observing that, in the present state, calamities befall good and bad men indiscriminately, the irreligious have concluded, that God takes no concern about the behaviour of men, and that *is is therefore vain to serve him**: and from observing that a strict adherence to virtue is, in some cases, the direct cause of suffering or loss, they have affected to conclude farther, that it is even folly to be virtuous. The great reward which God has promised to good men in the future life, is doubtless sufficient to render it our highest

* Mal. iii. 14.

wisdom to adhere to virtue, whatever sufferings it may bring upon us in the present life. But earthly things take so fast an hold of the minds of men, that sufferings for religion must always have some tendency to prevent their looking forward to the heavenly reward, with faith firm enough to sustain their fortitude, and secure their stedfastness. On this account the scripture often calls such sufferings, by way of eminence, *temptations*.

It is in the time of persecution chiefly, that men are exposed to temptations of this kind: but they are not totally exempt from them at any time. There will always be particular situations in which religion obstructs mens' worldly interest; in which we may forfeit some immediate advantage, or incur something troublesome or disagreeable, by inflexible and uncomplying virtue: and there will be many more situations, in which we may be apprehensive of these consequences. Though we be under no temptation to renounce ~~our~~ religion altogether, we may be very strongly tempted to what is inconsistent with some of its particular laws. Dread of incurring the ridicule of the world, the displeasure of friends, the resentment of the powerful, the loss of a favourable opportunity for gain, are often pleaded by men in every age, as ex-

cuses

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 153

cuses for acknowledged deviations from the strict line of integrity and innocence. Never therefore can it be unseasonable to exhort Christians to constancy in virtuous practice, notwithstanding the sufferings, losses, and inconveniences in which it may involve them, or to urge upon them for this purpose, the same arguments which the sacred writers proposed, for the confirmation of the first Christians enduring persecution for the sake of the gospel.

IN this earthly state, all men without exception are subjected to suffering and affliction. Far from considering this as unfavourable to the cause of virtue or religion, the sacred writers deduce from this very topic, an argument for resolution, patience, and constancy under the peculiar sufferings to which religion and virtue sometimes expose good men. To support the Christians of that age under persecution for righteousness sake, they remind them, that all mankind, as well as they, are obnoxious to many sufferings. *We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now **, says the apostle, in fortifying the Romans against *the sufferings of this present time †*. The Corinthians also were in

* Rom. viii. 22.

† Ver. 18.

danger

danger of suffering for religion. They dreaded that their refusing all communion with the Pagans in their idolatrous feasts, might provoke their resentment and raise a persecution : perhaps they had experienced this in some degree. The gospel notwithstanding required them to persist in their refusal : compliance with any appendage of Pagan worship, would have been an apostasy from the faith of Christ, and from the service of the one living God. The apostle exhorts them to inflexible resolution, *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall ;* and enforceth the exhortation by this argument, *there hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.* The sufferings which you have incurred by your steadfastness, and all the sufferings which by it you can incur, are only such as are ordinary in the life of man : therefore you ought to meet them with fortitude, to bear them with patience, and not allow yourselves to be moved by them to deviate from the purity of the gospel in a point so essential. The force of the argument cannot but be felt, as soon as it is proposed. Yet its impression may be strengthened by its being deliberately unfolded, by our considering attentively in what particular ways the common troubles of human life urge us to submit chearfully to those troubles which the good man may sometimes incur by doing his duty.

duty. They urge us to this conduct, by the example of suffering which they exhibit,—by leading us to conclude that, if we had not been exposed to sufferings for virtue, other afflictions would have been allotted to us,—by convincing us that by deviating from virtue we can obtain no security against falling into the like sufferings,—and by stamping vanity upon all present outward things.

FIRST, The afflictions and sorrows which are common, and even universal in human life, excite us to constancy under sufferings for religion and a good conscience, by the very example of suffering which they exhibit. Think not for a single moment of deserting religion, of transgressing any one of its laws, on account of the inconveniences to which it may expose you; for these inconveniences, whatever they be, are only such as men, in this mortal state, very commonly endure,

IF the generality passed through life without seeing any evil days, you might have some excuse for thinking it hard that you alone should be subjected to affliction, especially that you should be subjected to it by a strict adherence to your duty. But every one that is *born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble;*

trouble *; on every man sorrows are multiplied by one cause or another: you cannot expect an exemption from the necessary condition of your species; when you too *find trouble and sorrow* †, why should you repine? Its being occasioned by your steadfastness in your duty, renders your condition no worse than that of many, who have fallen into as great trouble by other means. If the fulfilling of the obligations of religion exposes you to suffering, you ought not to venture on transgressing them in order to avoid it, till you have first surveyed all the miseries of those who suffer, but not for religion; till you have traced the disasters of all ages down from Adam to the present hour; and till you be able to say, that what you must endure in *retaining your integrity* ‡, is bitterer than ever fell to the lot of man. But truly, religion never exposed its most determined champions, even in the bloodiest persecutions, to greater losses or severer pains, than many have been forced to encounter in the common course of providence, or have brought upon themselves by their imprudence or their crimes. Religion has exposed men to *the spoiling of their goods* §, to *suffer the loss of all things for Christ Jesus* **: suppose it should require you, in ad-

* Job xiv. 1. † Psal. cxvi. 3. ‡ Job ii. 9. § Heb. x. 34.
 ** Phil. iii. 8.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 157

hering to virtue, to relinquish all your possessions: yet would it reduce you to a worse condition than that man whom you see contentedly earning a scanty livelihood by his daily labour, or than that other whom you find always chearful, though he be begging his bread. Look to them, and be ashamed to commit the smallest sin through dread of poverty. Religion has exposed men to *bonds and imprisonment* *: they are grievous: but have not many suffered them, and suffered them with patience, for other causes than firmness in religion? Religion has exposed men to death: but is death an uncommon event? Is it not strictly universal and inevitable? Do you not see men dying around you every day? If God brings you into such circumstances, that you must either desert your duty or lay down your life, can you hesitate in fixing your choice? There are a thousand other ways in which you may lose your life: in some way, you must lose it soon; but in no other way, can it be so honourable, so glorious, to lose it. If it be in the very prime of your days that you are called to sacrifice your life to the fulfilment of your duty; yet still you shall be but one of many hundreds who are cut off in the prime of their days; and when it

* Heb. xi. 36.

is certain that you must die once, can it be of very great importance, whether you die to-day, or to-morrow, or not many days hence? The dread of death, strong as it naturally is in men, cannot always prevent their exposing themselves to the danger of it, in the prosecution of their worldly interests, nay in the very train of their amusements: shall we, notwithstanding, allow it to prevent our exposing ourselves to that danger, in securing our eternal interests by constancy in avoiding evil and doing good? The dread of a violent death has not always power enough to restrain the wicked from the crimes against which it is denounced: and shall it be able to pervert us from our virtue? Shall they encounter tribulations in the way of destruction, which we refuse to meet in the way of salvation? *Forward and strange is the way of man**: he is *wise and bold to do evil; but to do good he hath no knowledge*†, no resolution. The fury of wicked men has sometimes prepared cruel tortures for the martyrs of God: but tortures as cruel have often been inflicted on the atrocious criminal, the detested rival, or even the unhappy captive: and the pains of natural death in some of its forms, are both greater and more lasting than any artificial torments.

* Prov. xxi. 3.

† Jer. iv. 22.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 139

What sufferings can excuse your being deterred from your duty or frightened into sin? The greatest that you can incur, are only such as multitudes have sustained when religion was not at all concerned.

BUT all the inconveniences which men ordinarily meet with in adhering to their duty, are far less than many of the most common evils of life: they are among the very slightest distresses incident to man: they are such as thousands and ten thousands suffer day after day, almost without a murmur. The sneer of the ungodly, the scoff of the prophane, the frown of the unprincipled or the misjudging, the forfeiture of a small immediate profit, the loss of an opportunity of becoming a little richer or a little greater, the sacrifice of a trifling proportion of what we have, the pain of denying ourselves some sensual pleasure which a brute might relish as much as we; These are the troubles, for exposing us to which we often complain of religion and of virtue as enemies to our present interest and enjoyment, and for avoiding which we too often venture to do what our hearts condemn! What are these amidst the multitudes of calamities under which human creatures groan? How many endure them, and endure them willingly, for purposes infinitely less considerable than
the

the preservation of a good conscience? For the sake of these, to entertain a thought of venturing on the least deviation from virtue, would demonstrate a want of all regard to it, would betray less spirit than the meanest of mankind exert almost every day. These are hardships very *common to man*; they are so very common and so very trivial, that they scarcely deserve to be called *temptations*; they are acknowledged by all, when religion is not in the question, to be extremely slight.

IN a word, Religion can never expose men to greater sufferings, it generally exposes men to much more tolerable sufferings than *such as are common to man*. Whatever you may suffer by *patient continuance in well-doing* *, you cannot be singular in your suffering. The present state is so much a state of sorrow and affliction to all, that to have the spirit of martyrdom for religion, is little more than to have the spirit of a man, the resolution necessary for bearing the ordinary vicissitudes and troubles of human life. We act not the part of men, if we shew any anxiety to shun whatever distresses cannot be shunned except by our forfeiting our innocence.

* Rom. ii 7.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, Because sorrows and sufferings are universal in this life, and every individual of the human species has a share of them, we reasonably conclude, that, if we were exempt from those which at any time we incur by doing our duty, other afflictions would have been allotted to us, perhaps equally, perhaps more severe. Let *no man*, therefore, *be moved by these afflictions* *; accept them as your lot without repining; endure them without being *shaken in mind* †, or *falling from your own steadfastness* ‡.

MAN is born unto trouble ||; it is the appointed inheritance of his nature; for any man to elude the appointment, is as impossible as to reverse the established law of matter by which *the sparks fly upward* ||. The God who made us, hath measured out to every man his portion of affliction. If it shall fall to your lot, to suffer affliction for the sake of virtue, be assured that without this, or some other equivalent affliction, your measure could not have been full. Whatever loss you incur, whatever hardship you undergo, by persevering in what is right, it is only in the place of some other loss or hardship, which else you must have incurred by different means. By encountering it, you render your condition no

* 1 Theff. iii. 3. † 2 Theff. ii. 2. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 17. || Job v. 7.

more than it would have been at any rate. Perhaps you reckon it an aggravation of your trouble, that it is occasioned by your virtue: when the excellence of virtue should secure its leading us to quietness, peace, joy, honour, and good report, is there not a peculiar hardship in being, for the very sake of it, plunged into the contrary evils? can we but be disappointed? can we but regret that the natural consequences of actions should be so much perverted? The regret is only the suggestion of a heart prone to repining, and cold in its attachment to virtue. The disappointment is only the failure of a groundless expectation: we are forewarned that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall sometimes suffer persecution* *. The hardship is only in imagination: sufferings occasioned by your doing your duty, cannot be more galling than the same or equal sufferings proceeding from other causes. They are on many accounts lighter and more eligible.

THE God of mercy *doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men* †. He mingles their cup with sorrow, only because it is necessary for their discipline and improvement in this state of probation. He chasteneth us only *for our profit, that we might be partakers of his*

* 2 Tim. iii. 12. † Lam. iii. 33.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 163

holiness *: and he never chasteneth any who serve him with sincerity, farther than is needful for answering this end. Now afflictions incurred by constancy in virtue, promote our improvement more directly and more powerfully, than those which are incurred by any other means. The latter, though we bear them in the best manner, curb only some of our carnal or worldly lusts, improve only some particular virtuous principles, the principles of resignation, submission, patience, and trust in God: but the former improve all the virtuous principles at once, add strength to the whole temper of goodness, and confirm us in universal holiness; by their natural operation, they *yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby* †; they are the very *trial of our faith, much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire* ‡. To have answered the same good purposes to our souls, to have raised us to an equal degree of improvement, sufferings from other causes must have been severer. No affliction, therefore, which you can undergo in the cause of virtue, can be the subject of just complaint; it is the subject of gratitude and joy: it saves you from a heavier affliction: without the one or the other, some trial necessary for your

* Heb. xii. 10.

† Ver. 11.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 7.

sanctification had been wanting; and the want of it might have proved the ruin of your souls.

AT the same time, afflictions incurred by steadfast adherence to virtue, are more honourable than any others; they are relieved by more powerful supports and sweeter consolations; and they will be followed by a greater reward.— In bearing afflictions absolutely and by every means inevitable, there is little praise: but to *chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God* †, than to purchase immunity from it by any vicious compliance or blameable neglect, is the highest praise. To suffer for evil-doing, is ignominious; resolution in enduring it, is often only hardiness and effrontery in sin; at the best it cannot atone for the ignominy of the crime: *What glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently* *? But *this is glory, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully* †. Poverty incurred by the strictness of integrity, has nothing abject; reproach provoked by a determined steadiness or an unfashionable delicacy of virtue, is true renown; bonds and imprisonments inflicted for unbending perseverance in what is right, are genuine liberty; death itself for the sake of God and of Christ, is a crown

† Heb. xi. 25 * 1 Pet. ii. 20. † Ver. 19.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 165

of life. *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer; yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf†. If you be called to suffer shame, or loss, or inconvenience, for the name of Jesus, rejoice that ye are counted worthy||.*—The wicked may be forced to suffer what it is beyond their strength to bear; their sufferings are embittered by the cutting sense of guilt; their sufferings are sent by God in his anger, for their punishment; and who knoweth the power of his anger‡? But in discharging your duty with fidelity and steadiness, God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*. If ye be reproached, or stript of your goods, or subjected to any pain, for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you§. Therefore, says the apostle, *I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong†.* In such sufferings, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day||. The sincerity and the vigour of our virtue are ascertained; we enjoy the applauses of

† Chap. iv. 15, 16. || Acts v. 41. † Psal. xc. 11. * 1 Cor. x. 13.
§ 1 Pet. iv. 14. † 2 Cor. xii. 10. || Chap. iv. 16.

an assured conscience; every reflection on our conduct strengthens our assurance and renews our joy; we share in the triumphs of the martyrs; we glory in confidence of the special favour of God, who can, in the very midst of our sorrows, fill us with *peace* and joy *which passeth all understanding* †. In other afflictions, the utmost we can do, is to be *patient*; it is only in tribulations for the sake of righteousness that we can *glory* §, and in all such we have reason to be *exceeding joyful* *.—Mitigated during their continuance by *the consolations of God* ‡, they shall be recompensed in the end with eminence of happiness. *If when you do well, and suffer for it, whether your suffering be of a heavier or lighter sort, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God* ||, whose it is to recompense. To embrace such sufferings, rather than act a vicious part in any instance, shews incorruptible rectitude of soul, and confirms it. It is such *affliction*, that, though *light* and *but for a moment*, *worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* **. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience; and let your patience under them have perfect work, that ye*

† Phil. iv. 7. § Rom. v. 3. 2. * 2 Cor. vii. 4. ‡ Job xv. 11.
|| 1 Pet. ii. 20. ** 2 Cor. iv. 17.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 167

may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing †. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him ‡. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: instead of shrinking, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ||.

IN short, Suffering is the lot of all men: if you had escaped the sufferings which you may at times endure for religion, you might have expected other sufferings in their room: To have contributed as much to your improvement, these must have been greater; but you would have had weaker supports, slenderer consolations, and a less reward. Grudge not therefore, but rejoice, if sufferings for well-doing shall fall to your share, instead of common afflictions; encounter them with alacrity; refuse to deviate from your duty in any point, though by the smallest deviation you could be certain to avoid them.

BUT this is not the case: for, *thirdly*, the universality of sufferings and afflictions in the present state, is sufficient to convince us that,

† Jam. i. 2, 3, 4.

‡ Ver. 12.

|| Mat. v. 11, 12.

if we be prevailed upon to deviate from virtue, by the sufferings to which it may sometimes expose us, yet we cannot by the deviation escape affliction, or obtain security against falling into the like sufferings by other means. The question is not, Whether you shall desert your duty and be exempt from trouble, or adhere to your duty and incur trouble? This is the gross misrepresentation of your own delusive fancy: no such choice can be permitted you. The question is, Whether you shall *hold fast* your *righteousness**, and patiently endure whatever trouble it may occasion, or *let go* your righteousness and yet be forced to endure trouble? In this state of the question, can your election be attended with any difficulty? But this is the real state. Who ever passed through life without meeting a time of trouble? What age, what station, what profession, what character, what conduct, could ever prove a security against it? It is the sad birthright of fallen man. How should you alone hope to escape it, and to escape it too by declining from your duty, by renouncing your virtue?

THAT God, whose appointment the lot of human creatures is, hath in his wisdom ordained, that the same distresses should be

* Job xxvii. 6.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 169.

brought on different men, by different causes. Some are born to indigence; some are reduced to it by unavoidable calamities; some purchase it by folly or their vices; some incur it by the steadfastness of their virtue. One is brought prematurely to the grave by the pining decay of a weakly constitution; another by the violence of an acute distemper; one is cut off in his full strength by some fatal accident; another falls a victim to the poison of his vices, or the demerit of his crimes; and another encounters death in the midst of his days for the sake of God and a good conscience. There is scarcely a circumstance in the state of man, which may not prove the source of almost any of the pains and distresses to which he is obnoxious. What trouble can religion bring upon you, that may not likewise proceed from many other causes? When through dread of it, you have violated your virtue and wounded your souls with guilt, how soon may some of these other causes plunge you into that very trouble? Suppose it were one of the most grievous troubles incident to man; nevertheless it is folly to commit any sin or forbear any duty in order to avoid it, unless you could promise to defeat all the other causes which may afterwards produce it. The very hour after you have *made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience**,

* 1 Tim. i. 19.

the irresistible stroke of divine Providence, or that very act of vice by which you hoped to avert it, may hurl it down upon your heads in all its fury. You have an opportunity, for instance, of preserving your possessions or of increasing them, by dishonesty or falshood or sin: you seize the opportunity: but the thief, the oppressor, the fire, the elements, any one of a thousand common misfortunes, perhaps the very detection of your baseness, may very soon rob you of all that you expected to secure, pluck *the wages of unrighteousness* * out of your hands, and leave you nothing but the pollution which you have contracted in grasping at them. There is some person from whose favour you expect much, or whose displeasure you reckon very detrimental to your interest; you do something wrong to gratify him: but in a few days, from the mere mutability of caprice, from a misconstruction which you have no means of preventing or correcting, nay, it may be, despising you for the meanness of your compliance with his humour or his vices, that person may withdraw his deceitful favour, become your enemy, and abandon you without pity to the agonizing reflection, that you have sold your innocence for nought. When Judas, stung with remorse,

* 2 Pet. ii. 15.

came to the *chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood, without any compassion for his anguish, without so much as thanking him for having fulfilled their darling wish, they answered him, what is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the whole price of his perfidy, and departed, and went and hanged himself* †. Instances of such disappointments of the apostate's hopes, might easily be multiplied; they are numerous both in the history of the dead, and in the experience of the living; they are alarming warnings to every one of us, that apostasy from our duty can be no refuge from the troubles which we fear in performing it.

THAT apostasy from any point of duty will increase our trouble, is much more likely than that it can bring us immunity from trouble. The soldier who through fear of death flees from his post in battle, is forced to submit with ignominy to the very death which he might have met with honour in the field. If virtue itself, which is beloved by the God who orders all events, and is the object of his special favour and protection, cannot secure men from tribulation in this land of sorrow, is security to be expected from vice, which is odi-

† Mat. xxvi. 3, 4, 5.

ous to him, which forfeits his favour, takes us out of his protection, and provokes his wrath? The whole tendency of virtue is naturally to peace and prosperity; it is only by its imperfection in the human character, and by the prevalence of vice counteracting its operation, that ever it becomes the occasion of pain or suffering. But sin is the natural parent of pain and suffering; it alone brought them into the world; it alone perpetuates them in the world. *Evil pursueth sinners* *; their portion is grief upon grief, and distress upon distress, till death carry them into the place where there shall be *wailing and gnashing of teeth* †. They who through fear of suffering or loss desert from the service of God, to the service of sin, can scarcely fail to *pierce themselves through with many sorrows* ‡. Miserable are they, if they escape heavy sorrows. After having thus *fallen away*, the strongest means are necessary for *renewing them again unto repentance* ||: they must *be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction*, in order to *shew them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded, and to open their ear to discipline, that they may return from iniquity* §. It is a part of God's promise of the Messiah, if

* Prov. xiii. 21. † Matt. xiii. 42. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 10.

|| Heb. vi. 6. § Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10.

SERM. VII. by the common Sufferings of Life. 173

*his children forsake my law, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes §. To escape being visited by calamities equal at least to those which you evaded by your defection, would shew you to be given up by God, unto your own hearts lust *, to be reprobated from the heritage of those that fear his name †, to be of them who draw back unto perdition ||. The greatest of the evils to which virtue can expose you, it is certain that you cannot evade by any defection from it. If you could effectually evade all other troubles, yet from death, the utmost that man can do, no defection of your duty can possibly redeem you. It is appointed unto men once to die. **: There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit in the day of death; there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it ††. Death is the most formidable temptation of the kind; and in great wisdom and great goodness God has provided, that against yielding to it, the argument is strongest: death, the apostate from integrity must notwithstanding meet; though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that his days are as a shadow; and cannot be prolonged for ever ‡.*

§ Psal. lxxxix. 30, 32. * Psal. lxxxxi. 12. † Psal. lxi. 5.
 ‡ Heb. x. 39. ** Chap. ix. 27. †† Eccl. viii. 8.. ‡ Ver. 12, 13.

BUT

BUT if the very calamity for avoiding which you have cast away your virtue, shall notwithstanding come upon you, or if a greater calamity shall overwhelm you, will you then find any comfort in reflecting, that you once warded it off for a little, by forsaking the ways of God, and forfeiting his favour? or when the hour is come, and it will soon come, in which death must remove you from this world, will you be able to rejoice in the consciousness that, a few days or months before, you renounced your virtue rather than quit the world? Will you then be entitled to the same self-approbation, the same joy in the Holy Ghost, the same bright hope of eternal life, which would have supported and invigorated you if you had encountered it for the sake of righteousness? Will it not, on the contrary, be aggravated by remorse, dejection, and terror? Will it be possible, in the day of trouble or of death, to reflect without insupportable regret and anguish, that you might have continued unblemished, that you might have retained the worth of the saint, that you might have purchased the glory of the martyr, and yet have been in no worse situation than that to which you are now reduced, after having lost your innocence, your honour, and your hope? The greatest alleviation of which the sufferings incident to mortality are susceptible,

SERM. VII. by the common Sufferings of Life. 175

is their being occasioned by inflexibility in what is right. In every respect it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing *. If ye obtain this lot, if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, and highly privileged above all your brethren in adversity: be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts †.

THUS, because this world is full of troubles, we cannot avoid them by forsaking the path of virtue; there are many causes which may precipitate us into the same or greater troubles; greater we shall need for our recovery, and must undergo if we be not abandoned to final apostasy, but undergo with far more grievous vexation of spirit. The object of your deliberation, in the hour of danger for conscience sake, is not, whether it be wiser to avoid troubles, or to endure them? It is simply, which is preferable, virtue or vice, a good conscience sweetening calamities, or an evil conscience embittering them, a blessed hope taking away the sting of death, or despair filling it with venom? He is a fool who will forfeit heaven, without so much as bettering his earthly state: we are guilty of this folly,

* 1 Pet. iii. 17.

† Ver. 14, 15.

if we commit any sin in order to avoid any temporal calamity or inconvenience, if *our heart be turned back from God, or our steps decline from his way*, though he should even *break us in the place of dragons; and cover us with the shadow of death* *.

FOURTHLY, The troubles and calamities which are common to man, excite us resolutely to encounter such as we meet with in the performance of our duty, by stamping vanity on all outward and temporal things.

THOUGH health, riches, honours, power, or sensual pleasures were in their nature capable of yielding full enjoyment to man, they could not yield it to him in the present state, because it abounds with troubles, any one of which will blast them and render them insipid. Whatever satisfaction mortal man may derive from them, it cannot be pure, it must be mixt with much alloy. Should wealth and dignities, in the greatest profusion, drop into his bosom, the stroke of disease will deprive them of all their power to gratify him: *all his days he eateth in darkness and much sorrow* †. Should his health be sound, he may languish in poverty or pine with hunger; all his efforts

* Psal. xliv. 18, 19.

† Eccl. v. 17.

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 177

for prosperity may prove abortive; he may attain prosperity, and find it a torment to his soul; and from the height of prosperity a moment may tumble him down into deep adversity. *Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow + ?* Every external joy is incomplete, for it is always impaired by some concomitant circumstance of uneasiness: it is transitory and precarious, for it is quickly obliterated by some succeeding sorrow; it can last only till death, and then it ceaseth for ever. Every one of the manifold troubles of human life is a voice from God, proclaiming to mankind, that nothing earthly can be the happiness of man. His happiness must be what is unassailable by calamity, and unextinguishable by death. It is only in religion, therefore, that he can find his happiness. In every situation he can adhere to religion, if he will; and if he adhere to it, nothing can deprive him of it. We cannot obtain whatever we may wish for; but we can dutifully welcome whatever God sends upon us. We cannot ward off every trouble; but we can take care not to multiply or aggravate our troubles by our own wickedness. We cannot avoid death; but we can prepare

Eccl. vi. 11, 12. It is vain to multiply wisdom, or to increase knowledge, or to multiply riches, or to increase strength, or to increase wisdom, or to increase knowledge, or to multiply riches, or to increase strength.

ourselves to die like Christians. We cannot prevent disagreeable and painful consequences arising from some of our actions; but we can prevent our actions from being other than they ought to be. By the divine assistance, of which the gospel assures us, virtue is always in our own power: through the vanity of the world, all things earthly and temporal are in the power of innumerable accidents. To sacrifice our virtue for present ease or security, to act viciously for fear of temporal loss or inconvenience, to depart from our duty in order to avoid the trouble which, in a particular instance, it threatens to bring upon us, were to exchange substantial happiness for an unsatisfying trifle, a permanent possession for a precarious and transient phantom; it were to prefer what will be quickly buried in the dust, to what will enter into heaven, and flourish through the ages of eternity; it were, in flying from a slight and momentary hurt, to rush into everlasting destruction. If by committing sin, if by swerving from steady virtue, you could be certain to extricate yourselves from the fear of suffering, yet the choice would be disadvantageous, pernicious, and ruinous.

In every light, therefore, it is a powerful argument for constancy in religion, that it can expose us to no loss, hardship, or affliction,

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 179

but such as is common to man. In all these ways, the universality of sorrow and suffering in the present state, may excite us to meet with fortitude, and to bear with patience, whatever we shall incur by a firm and conscientious adherence to our duty. It can be only such as multitudes endure in the ordinary course of human life: to shun it by throwing away your virtue, would be an unmanly weakness. It is allotted you in the place of some other affliction, which, to have been as effectual for your sanctification, must have been severer; you should rejoice in it, instead of entertaining a thought of averting it by sin. If you should sin, you cannot expect to avert it for ever; there are many causes which may still subject you to it; and whenever they do, it will be dreadfully embittered by the remembrance of your having once committed sin on purpose to elude it. But though you could effectually avert trouble by forsaking virtue, it were folly to forsake it; it were to barter your true happiness for mere vanity. *Wherefore let every man take heed lest he fall* *, for in standing fast no tribulation can come upon you but such as is common in the world. If it be the will of God, that you *must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God* †, it is likewise

* 1 Cor. x. 12.

† Acts xiv. 22.

through much tribulation that the wicked shall enter into the kingdom of Satan. Which is the better part, judge ye.

MANY are the arguments which enforce constancy in holiness in spite of all the consequences that can possibly attend it. The argument on which I have now insisted, is alone sufficient to determine those who will consider. If any thing seem necessary for adding to its force, allow me only to remind you of what bears a close relation to it, That the best men in all ages, far from being exempt from troubles, have endured many and grievous troubles, and often endured them for conscience sake. In suffering, you are but partakers with all mankind: in suffering for virtue and religion, you shall be but partakers with all the saints. As *the whole creation groaneth under the vanity to which it is subjected, so ourselves also, says the apostle, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves* *. Consider the days of old, the years of ancient times †. Take, my brethren, the apostles, take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience ‡. Ye have heard of the patience of Job ||: ye have heard of the innumerable company of

* Rom. viii. 20. 22, 23.

† Psal. lxxvii. 5.

‡ Jam. v. 10.

|| Ver. 11.

martyrs;

SERM. VII. *by the common Sufferings of Life.* 181

martyrs; they were tortured, not accepting deliverance; they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned; they were sawn asunder; they were slain with the sword; they wandered about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy *. But none of these things moved them, neither counted they their life dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy †. The worst that can befall you in adhering steadfastly to your duty, will not exceed what far better men have suffered. All that has befallen you, comes infinitely short of it. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin ‡.* No: all that you can plead in excuse of your past inconstancy in virtue, is loss so trivial, inconvenience so slight, uneasiness so insignificant, that it deserves not to be named with the least of their sufferings. It is shameful to complain of it; it is disgraceful, for the sake of it, to have made one step awry from the ways of God. Should you be put to a much severer trial, should you even be tried with the fiery trial, think it not strange, as though some strange thing happened unto you ||. It hath happened unto ten thousands of the saints. Let their sufferings and their intrepid perseverance banish your fears, confirm your resolution,

* Heb. xi. 35---38. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Heb. xii. 4. || 1 Pet. iv. 12.

and encourage your steadfastness. It is *through faith and patience*, that they now *inherit the promises* *: *Be ye also patient, and stablish your hearts* †; be ye *followers of them*, and ye shall obtain the same inheritance.—You have even a greater example than that of the saints. *Christ himself also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps* ‡. Though he was the Son of God, though he was perfectly holy, his sufferings, while he dwelt in this mortal state, surpassed all that ever befell a son of man, surpassed what any son of man could bear. They were appointed by God for accomplishing the most stupendous purpose, the redemption of the world; but they were immediately occasioned by his inflexible adherence to truth and righteousness. Can you expect to meet with no hardship, no inconvenience in pursuing the same conduct? Or will you grudge to meet it? *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. Fear not therefore* ||: *but rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. For if ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. If the sufferings of Christ even abound in us, our consolation also shall abound by Christ. When his glory shall be revealed, we shall be glad also with exceeding joy* §. It is a

* Heb. vi. 12. † Jam. v. 8. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21. || Mat. x. 24. 26. § 1 Pet. iv. 13. 2 Cor. i. 5. 7.

SERM. VII. by the common Sufferings of Life. 183

*faithful saying. For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: but if we deny him, he also will deny us **. I conclude with the apostle's address, *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds †*.

Now the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you: To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen ‡.

* 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. † Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

S E R M O N V I I I .

THE OLD AGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS, HONOURABLE.

PROV. xvi. 31.

*The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found
in the way of righteousness.*

THIS is a just aphorism, and beautifully expressed. Old age is, in a figurative and poetical manner, described by one of its concomitants, and by one which does not directly imply any of its infirmities, but rather is in its very appearance venerable, *the hoary head*, the grey hairs. As hairs are an ornament to the head, the wise man, by an elegant allusion to them, calls old age *a crown of glory*, encircling the head, adorning it, and challenging respect. Grey hairs indicate the decay of nature; but they are notwithstanding an honourable crown, if the man who wears them, *be found in the way of righteousness*. The plain meaning of the maxim is, That the old
age

age of good men is truly venerable, and entitles them to esteem and honour.

IN the present discourse, I shall briefly illustrate this maxim; and then deduce some practical reflections from it.

FIRST, I shall illustrate the maxim which Solomon delivers in the text, That good men, who have been allowed a long life, and have spent it in piety and virtue, are honourable in their old age, deserve, and even command esteem.

NATURE itself intimates that reverence is due to old age, and has always, both in the rudest and in the most civilized nations, led men very generally to give it reverence. When the young failed in respect to the old, or treated them with contempt, it has ever been considered as a certain mark of great degeneracy of manners. The wise men of all countries have acknowledged that years give one kind of *superiority*, and have inculcated reverence correspondent to it. To enforce the subjection of the younger to the elder, has been a part of the policy of all well regulated states; and in some states, this subjection has been carried very far, and insisted upon in its utmost extent, as indispensably necessary for the order and prosperity of society.

In

In the republic of Israel, God made it the subject of an express law; *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God; I am the Lord* *. Elihu followed the dictates of nature and of decency, when he waited till Job and his three friends had spoken, because they were elder than he †; and he spoke the language of both, when he said, *I am young, and ye are very old, wherefore I was afraid and durst not show you mine opinion: I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom* ‡.

OLD age, thus venerable on its own account, cannot fail to become much more venerable when it is found in the way of righteousness. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour* ||. True goodness in the greatest ornament of human nature; it is the properest object of approbation, and the justest foundation for esteem; it entitles every person who possesses it, to love and honour. It must therefore be a great ornament to old age, and render it truly respectable and venerable. When the reverence due to a character of true goodness, is added to the reverence due to old age, very high veneration must be the result.

* Lev. xix. 32. † Job. xxxii. 4. ‡ Ver. 6, 7. || Prov. xii. 26.

BUT

BUT for the more particular illustration of Solomon's maxim, for the fuller proof that the old age of the virtuous is honourable, let us consider their old age—in relation to the life which has preceded it,—in its own nature,—and in respect of the prospects which it opens.

1. THE old age of the virtuous is honourable on account of the life which has preceded it. It is the termination of a wise, a well-spent, and a useful life. Such a life was honourable, and it reflects great glory on the person who has accomplished it.

IN a religious and virtuous old man, we behold one who has long been exposed to the temptations of the world, and has overcome them. His virtues have been often put to the trial, and they have stood the trial. Every period of human life has its peculiar difficulties; the man who entered early on a religious and virtuous course, and went forward in it uniformly to old age, has surmounted all these difficulties. In a long life there never fail to be vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity, of joy and sorrow; it is honourable, through all these vicissitudes, to have remained steadfast in the love and practice of goodness. Sincere goodness is always approved by God, who knows the heart: but goodness must be tried, before
its

its sincerity can be fully ascertained in the eyes of men. We justly behold with pleasure, the promising beginnings of goodness in the young; but the most promising beginnings sometimes fail, the blossom is blasted, the fruit comes not to maturity: on this account, we can scarcely avoid mixing some degree of diffidence and reserve with our approbation of the virtues of the young. But the virtuous old man has fully approved himself to men, as well as to God; by many proofs he has rendered it unquestionable, that his goodness is true and genuine: we may proclaim his virtues with perfect confidence. Like a veteran, he has long encountered all the dangers of the Christian warfare; in many conflicts his resolution has been displayed, his steadiness manifested, and his inviolable attachment to God and goodness justified. His integrity is proved by the multitude of his triumphs; and they are triumphs full of the truest glory.

By trials, a man's virtue not only shows itself genuine, but also becomes confirmed, vigorous, and eminent. It is by exercise that every virtue is improved. The same temptations which endanger our virtues by their assaults, strengthen them when they are resisted. A long life contains many trials; and by every trial in which a man conquers, he is made better.

ter. If we devote ourselves to the practice of goodness in our earliest years, and thenceforth persist constantly in it, we must make great progress before we reach old age. A virtuous old person is a person of improved and exalted goodness. All that honour and glory which belongs to goodness, he claims in its highest degree.

AGAIN, A virtuous old age is the termination of a life which has been filled up with worthy and useful actions. When a man has begun early to do good, and lived to old age doing good, his services to God and to mankind must be numerous. He has had many opportunities of virtuous practice; if he has carefully improved them, to what honour is he not intitled? Every day a good man lives, he has greater glory than he had the day before; for he has done greater good. A long life of piety and virtue has contained a great multitude of good actions; each of these actions sends forth a ray of glory, which is reflected back upon him who did it; and when all the scattered rays are collected, and, as it were, twisted into a crown to encircle his hoary head, how glorious is that crown? With what lustre must it shine? How rich and how various an effulgence must it diffuse around him? The sparkling of the diamond is
dimness

dimness in comparison. The veneration due to virtuous old age, is the aggregate of all our approbations of the many virtuous and useful actions with which the precedent life abounded; and this veneration is heightened and sweetened by the emotions of love and gratitude for the advantages which mankind have derived from so long a series of good offices.

2. THE old age of the virtuous is honourable in itself, as well as in its relation to their past life.

THIS appears in some measure from what has been already said. The character which a pious and virtuous old person exhibits to our view, is that of goodness, genuine, improved, and useful; of all characters the most respectable. This character was acquired by the conduct of the whole life, and therefore naturally turns our eye backward to its course: but when we consider it as already formed, as now possessed in its maturity, and actuating the aged person in all his motions, it is, in itself, and without regard to the life which preceded it, a glorious ornament. In the earlier periods of life, the tenour of a man's virtue is sometimes interrupted, and its brightness tarnished, by the impetuosity of the passions, and the faults into which they precipitate him. Age calms

calms the mind, frees it from turbulent and unruly passions, composes it into a holy serenity, and makes all the virtues of the heart to shine forth, like the sun in the clearest day, unobscured by the clouds of vice.

BUT not to enlarge on this; In old age, virtue is naturally accompanied by wisdom and prudence, derived from long experience; and by its union with these, its lustre is augmented. *Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory* *. Experience is the most powerful teacher; in youth men must be in a great measure destitute of its lights; and in consequence of this, in some cases they must be ignorant, and in other cases they must misjudge; it is when they are advanced in life, that their knowledge becomes extensive, their sentiments just, and their maxims solid. In early life, the violence of the passions often hurries men on rashly to action, without allowing them either leisure or inclination to listen to the voice of reason and the suggestions of prudence. It is when years have rendered the passions less headstrong, and the judgment more mature, that reason is heard, and wisdom acquired. In all the savage nations the old men have, from a fixt

* *Eccles. xxy. 6.*

opinion of their wisdom, the greatest weight in all public counsels. The experience of age qualifies men for instructing, for advising, for directing. When men are destitute of piety and virtue, their experience is often only skillfulness in vice; all their wisdom is but cunning, and their maxims but the rules of deceit; at the best, their prudence is confined to the things of this world. By communicating their sentiments to the younger, if they do not corrupt them, they will instruct them only in what regards their temporal interests, and the conduct of civil life. But when a man has grown old in goodness, his maxims even for the present life are corrected, and his prudence sanctified, by religion: and his prudence is not confined to earthly things, his experience is great in religious matters likewise; he has spiritual wisdom, and is fit to lead others forward in the paths of righteousness. He knows the various frailties of human nature, for he has long experienced them; and he can prescribe the properest remedies for removing or alleviating them. He has had opportunity of observing the several wiles of Satan, and deceits of sin; and is acquainted with the best defences against them. He has long studied the ways of God towards man; he understands the language of the various dispensations of Providence; and he can teach

N

others

others how to improve them. He has learned the true value of things, and found the vanity of the world; and can check those gay ideas and sanguine hopes of youth, which, when they are indulged without any check, overwhelm men with bitter disappointment. It is honourable for a man to be knowing in a useful business: the virtuous old man has the honour of being knowing in that business which is the most important to every man. We respect those who are able to direct and counsel us: the aged saint is able to direct and counsel us in our chief concern, the improvement of our immortal souls: the respect which we owe him, is proportioned to the moment of this object.

IN old age, the strength necessarily decays, the body becomes weak and feeble, infirmities are multiplied. It is only the most worthless, or the most thoughtless, that can on this account despise an aged person. From all of other characters, the infirmities of age will command the tenderest sympathy; and this sympathy, far from extinguishing respect, will mix with it, soften its feelings, and make it to shew its power by the most attentive care to avoid whatever could give uneasiness to the aged person, and by the most assiduous endeavours to mitigate his distresses and promote his comfort. When the infirmities of age are
hastened

hastened or increased by a life of debauchery and vice, they do render a person despicable: but the bodies of good men are worn out in the practice of virtue, in the service of God and mankind, and the improvement of their own souls. Their infirmities themselves are therefore honourable; they are like the wounds which the soldier has received in fighting bravely for his country, and in which he glories. They lead us only to regret the frailty of nature, which permits not the world longer to enjoy a deserving man. When amidst the infirmities of age, a person affects the levities, or betrays a remaining attachment to the impurities of youth, it is at once ridiculous and shocking; all respect vanishes; we can scarcely help giving full scope to indignation and contempt: but his corruption, not his decrepitude, is the object of these sentiments; the contrary sentiments are those which virtue inspires. Under the infirmities of old age, no wonder that the vicious sink: but they give the virtuous an opportunity of shewing the triumphs of religion and goodness, in a new and striking light: a person supporting these infirmities with patience, amidst them all preserving composure, serenity, and cheerfulness,—is he more venerable, or more amiable? He does honour to the power of religion; and he is honoured by his

possessing religion in such power, and exerting it with such splendour.

THE old age of good men is honourable in respect of the prospects which attend it. These are the principal causes of that firmness and cheerfulness under their infirmities, which, we have just now seen, procures them reverence; and these reflect honour upon them in other ways.

OLD age is the termination of this mortal life; but to good men it is the immediate prelude to immortality. A person who early began to *follow holiness**, and has persisted in it to an advanced age, is ripe for the glory and happiness of heaven.

IT is of this man that Eliphaz beautifully observes, *Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season*†. Like the corn of a fertile field, he has grown up gradually, pleasant in the sight of God and man, and reached full maturity; and now he is ready, not to be cut down and cast into the fire like tares, but to be gathered in, removed beyond the reach of all the storms and tempests of this world, and placed in everlasting security and peace.

* Heb. xiii. 14.

† Job v. 26.

HIS hoary head is a natural emblem, and the direct fore-runner of that everlasting crown which he is ready to receive.

Now is his *salvation near**. His prospects are instantly to take place; and they are the most magnificent and glorious prospects, and built upon the surest foundation. They are ascertained by his past life and his present temper: he has the pleasant consciousness of a well-spent life; he has the comfortable sense of his being at *peace with God through Jesus Christ*†; he has the cheering view of being immediately delivered from every trouble, and every sorrow; he has the elevating hope of a great reward. He knows that his dissolution approaches fast; he perceives it without disquiet or regret; he perceives it with joy; he looks forward to the day of his death, as the birthday of his eternal life. When the apostle Paul was now an old man, and saw death ready to seize him even before the natural period, and in one of its most formidable shapes, he declared to Timothy the transporting prospects which lay before him; *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth*

* Rom xiii. 11.

† Chap. v. 1.

there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day †. Every good man has a right to indulge the same prospects; *and not to me only*, continues the apostle, *but unto all them also that love his appearing*. Can there be truer dignity than what is derived from such sentiments and views? They ennoble the soul. These are thy triumphs, O religion! Thou enablest thy votaries to despise what others court; to desire what others dread; to rejoice in what overwhelms others with sorrow and dejection: thou raisest them above mortality; thou introducest them into everlasting happiness and glory. The man who has grown old in goodness, is truly great: he can smile on death, he can scorn the king of terrors; he is just about to be advanced to a kingdom, and invested with a crown; he is quickly going to his God and his Saviour, to be set down with them upon their throne. Can you conceive a more venerable object than a person just ready to enter into heaven? With what respect, with what awe, with what admiration, would you gaze on one of the inhabitants of heaven, if he should revisit this earth, and present himself to your view? In a religious and virtuous old person, you behold a man

† 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

who, after a few breaths and pulses more, will be one of them; who already stands in the very gate of heaven, who is on the point of joining the *innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first born, God the judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.* This is real honour: it is he who is thus honoured by God, that may be pronounced venerable.

THUS I have endeavoured to illustrate Solomon's assertion, that the old age of the righteous is honourable. Let us now attend to some of the practical reflections which naturally arise from the subject of our discourse.

IN general, it gives us a striking view of the excellence of religion, of the importance of true goodness, fit to recommend it to our love, and to engage us in the practice of it. It doubles the honours of age, it renders even its infirmities respectable, it gives joy amidst all its distresses. This is an illustrious display of the power of goodness, a full proof that it is in its nature excellent and honourable. Let us all value and pursue it, as the highest dignity and felicity of our souls. It is the guide and the guard of youth, the defence and the support of old age, the ornament of all the

periods of life. It alone can preserve us innocent and blameless in our younger and gayer days, render us useful in our maturity, and give us comfort and hearts-ease, when nothing else can give them, in our decline: it alone can regulate our temper and our conduct in the present life; and it alone can prepare us for happiness in the next, and by the cheering, the celestial hope of unchangeable felicity beyond the grave, reconcile us to all the vicissitudes of time.

IN particular, the maxim which has been illustrated, may be distinctly improved—by the young—and by the old.

IT instructs the young in the duty which they owe to their elders. Their years give them a superiority, their experience gives them prudence, and, if they have *exercised themselves unto godliness* *, the length of their exercise has rendered them proficient in holiness: these are all natural motives to respect, esteem, and honour. The young sometimes allow themselves to despise the aged for the infirmities of their bodies, and the decays of their activity and strength. This shows always giddiness and inconsideration; often it

* 1 Tim. iv. 7

proceeds from depravity of heart, and is attended with degeneracy of manners. It is to disregard the order of nature, which gives pre-eminence to age; it is to find fault with age for wanting what the constitution of things cannot permit it to have: *the glory of young men is their strength; but the beauty of old men is the grey head*†. As years come on, the vigour of youth departs, but it is succeeded by accomplishments more respectable; what time takes from men's bodies, it generally adds to their minds; in proportion as the decay of their strength unqualifies them for executing, their experience and prudence fit them for contriving and advising. The young sometimes conceitedly prefer their own ignorance to the understanding of the ancients; they condemn their counsels because they are unsuitable to their own taste; they are headstrong, impetuous, impatient of control, and cast off that deference to the judgment of their elders, which would check the violence of their passions, and restrain the impulses of their presumption. *This their way is their folly*‡: experience generally leads them to adopt the very maxims which they once rejected with scorn, and convinces them that they would have avoided many errors, miscar-

† Prov. xx. 29.

‡ Psal. xlix. 13.

riages, and sufferings, if they had been pleased to learn these maxims from the experience of others. It is the law of nature, it is the will of God, that the younger should honour and regard the elder. It is the very condition of our being that human creatures should be placed under their elders: children are taught by nature to submit to the instruction, and rely on the advice of their parents and teachers; and in the succeeding periods of life, it is by observing those who go before us, and learning from them, that we become gradually more perfect in the several functions of life, often without our reflecting that this is the means by which it happens. God thus trains us up in respect to our elders, and forms us insensibly to that reverence which is due to old age, especially when it is found adorned with piety and virtue: and he requires us to pay it this reverence. *Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder **, is the injunction of an inspired apostle. Especially reverence such of your elders as are peculiarly related to you: *children obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord †: honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth ‡.*

* 1 Pet. v. 5.

† Col. iii. 20.

‡ Eph. vi. 2, 3.

THE subject of this discourse suggests to the young, instructions likewise of a more extensive nature: it urges them to begin early a religious and holy life. It is only when the life has been spent in goodness, that true honour is reflected on the hoary head. Age is venerable in itself; but folly is sufficient to render it despicable; and wickedness is the greatest folly; and renders it even detestable. Honour is due to the aged; but by their crimes, they may forfeit their claim to honour. Would you establish your claim to honour when you shall arrive at old age? be good betimes: begin early, and persist steadily. When the life has been spent in virtue, that virtue will shine mature and perfect in old age: but old age is not the season for beginning to be virtuous: when *the evil days* are already come, and *the years* in which thou hast no pleasure; when *the sun*, and *the light*, and *the moon* are already darkened, and *the clouds* return after the rain; when *the keepers of the house* tremble, and *the strong men* bow down themselves, and *the grinders* cease because they are few, and *those that look out of the windows* be darkened, and *the doors* are shut in the streets, and *the sound of the grinding* is low, and thou risest up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low, and fears are in the way, and the grasshopper is a burden,

and

*and desire has failed, and the mourners already go about the streets; then it is too late, by far too late to begin to be virtuous, for then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it *. It is beautiful to behold the fields in harvest covered with corn ripe for the sickle: but it cannot be beheld, except the corn has been sown in the spring. Youth is the spring of life: remember thy creator in the days of thy youth. Then, if you live to be old, your grey hairs shall be a crown of glory: and then, it shall be of little moment to you, whether you live to be old, or not; for at whatever age you die, your virtues shall be ripe, and your souls meet for the inheritance of the saints in light †. Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest; for honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years; but wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age: he being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time ||.*

IN the subject of this discourse, the old are particularly interested.

ARE any of you, ye aged, yet strangers to the way of righteousness? Your hoary head is

* Eccles. xii. 1---7. † Col. i. 12. ‡ Wisd. iv. 7, 8, 9. 13.
your

your disgrace. The wicked, *though they live long, yet shall they be nothing regarded, and their last age shall be without honour**. When a man has lived in sin and grown old in it, he inherits the iniquities of his youth, and the iniquities of all the successive stages of his life: they have been multiplied as his days; the guilt of them all remains accumulated on his hoary head, the ignominy of them all over-spreads his wrinkled face. By long practice, his vicious habits have become inveterate, they cleave to him and deform him like a leprosy, they are inwrought into all the faculties of his soul: they have vitiated them so entirely, that often, when he can no longer commit his former sins, he ruminates upon them with pleasure, relates them, and recommends them; and by thus corrupting the young, merits their contempt and execration, and infallibly incurs the indignation and abhorrence of every person who has a regard either to virtue or to decency. He has no rational sentiments, no comfortable reflections, no chearful hopes, to relieve the infirmities, to allay the pains, to soften the sorrows of his decline. Having lived depraved and despicable, his soul as degenerate as his body is decrepid, his soul as ready for destruction as his body for corruption

* Wisd. iii. 17.

in the dust, he dies ; either rushing into misery unthinking as the *sheep are laid in the grave **, or meeting it with horror, despair, and anguish. *Horrible is the end of the unrighteous generation † ! When they cast up the accounts of their sins, they shall come with fear, and their own iniquities shall convince them to their face ‡.* At every age, vice is the greatest folly ; for at every age men may be hurried in a moment to suffer the punishment of vice : but in old age, vice is perfect madness, for the hoary sinner must quickly be summoned to his doom. How dreadfully dangerous is your state ? You have all the sins of a long life to repent of, you have all the habits of a long life to eradicate, and you have no time remaining for it. Your sun is already setting ; and you have not yet begun the work of the day ; how shall you be able to finish it ? repent immediately ; and *pray God, if perhaps thy wickedness may be forgiven thee ||*, and thou become *a brand pluckt out of the fire §.*

BUT are you, on the other hand, ye aged, *in the way of righteousness ?* Rejoice, because your age is honourable. It is *clearer than the noon-day ; you shine forth, you are as the morn-*

* Psa. xlix. 14.

† Wisd. iii. 19.

‡ Chap. iv. 20.

|| Acts viii. 22.

§ Zech. iii. 2.

ing, you are *secure because there is hope*, and may take your rest in safety *. But remember that your period of life, as well as the periods which you have already passed, has its peculiar duties and its peculiar temptations. Therefore the apostle exhorts, *that the aged men be sober, vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience: the aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things* ||. Be careful to practise all the duties, and to resist all the temptations of your condition: thus you shall still bring forth fruit in old age §. Employ your prudence in enlightening the inexperience of youth, in checking its violence and preventing its wanderings: at the same time, make great allowance for the gaiety, the ignorance, the eagerness, which are inseparable from youth. You will insinuate your documents most effectually, when you invite the young to listen to them, by the cheerfulness of your hearts, by the sweetness of your manners, and by the candour of your sentiments. Under your growing infirmities, uphold yourselves by the approbation of your consciences, by firm confidence in the mercy and munificence of God through Jesus Christ, by the

* Job xi. 17, 18. || Tit. ii. 2, 3. § Psal. xcii. 14.

hope of immortality just at hand. Supported by these, you may bear your pains with patience, and meet your decays with resignation. Sully not the honours of your age by peevishness, discontent, or ill humour; manifest the energy of religion by the composure, the meekness, and the wisdom of your demeanour. Draw off your affections more than ever from this world, which you are now so very soon to leave. Be not so busy as heretofore in the pursuit of those earthly things which now can profit you for so very short a moment. Employ more time than ever in retirement and devotion. Examine your past life over and over; renew your repentance for all your sins; if there be in your souls any remaining stain derived from the cares or the pleasures of the world, labour to wash it out; if there be any passion yet irregular, mortify it more completely; if any virtue be still weak, set yourselves to strengthen it; if your former vices have left any evil consequences, repair them as much as possible; if in any duty you have been defective, endeavour to supply what was wanting. Let your thoughts be fixt on the heavenly state, from which you are now separated by so thin a veil; render it familiar to yourselves by frequent meditation; accustom yourselves to its employments, by giving full scope

scope to all the pious and all the benevolent affections ; from the perfect exercise of which a great part of the happiness of heaven will arise.

○

SERMON

to all the pious and all the benevolent
sufferers; from the perfect exercise of which a
great part of the happiness of heaven will
arise.

The first of these is the perfect exercise of
the law of love. The second is the perfect
exercise of the law of justice. The third is
the perfect exercise of the law of mercy.
The fourth is the perfect exercise of the
law of wisdom. The fifth is the perfect
exercise of the law of power. The sixth is
the perfect exercise of the law of glory.
The seventh is the perfect exercise of the
law of life. The eighth is the perfect
exercise of the law of death. The ninth is
the perfect exercise of the law of resurrection.
The tenth is the perfect exercise of the
law of judgment. The eleventh is the
perfect exercise of the law of reward.
The twelfth is the perfect exercise of the
law of punishment. The thirteenth is the
perfect exercise of the law of grace.
The fourteenth is the perfect exercise of
the law of truth. The fifteenth is the
perfect exercise of the law of peace.
The sixteenth is the perfect exercise of
the law of unity. The seventeenth is the
perfect exercise of the law of holiness.
The eighteenth is the perfect exercise of
the law of righteousness. The nineteenth is
the perfect exercise of the law of love.

SERMON
O
The first of these is the perfect exercise of
the law of love. The second is the perfect
exercise of the law of justice. The third is
the perfect exercise of the law of mercy.
The fourth is the perfect exercise of the
law of wisdom. The fifth is the perfect
exercise of the law of power. The sixth is
the perfect exercise of the law of glory.
The seventh is the perfect exercise of the
law of life. The eighth is the perfect
exercise of the law of death. The ninth is
the perfect exercise of the law of resurrection.
The tenth is the perfect exercise of the
law of judgment. The eleventh is the
perfect exercise of the law of reward.
The twelfth is the perfect exercise of the
law of punishment. The thirteenth is the
perfect exercise of the law of grace.
The fourteenth is the perfect exercise of
the law of truth. The fifteenth is the
perfect exercise of the law of peace.
The sixteenth is the perfect exercise of
the law of unity. The seventeenth is the
perfect exercise of the law of holiness.
The eighteenth is the perfect exercise of
the law of righteousness. The nineteenth is
the perfect exercise of the law of love.

S E R M O N IX.

THE DIVERSITY OF MEN'S NATURAL TEMPERS.

PROV. xxv. 28.

He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.

THE spirit of a man, is an expression which has different significations in scripture, and particularly in the book of Proverbs. It sometimes signifies the powers of the understanding; as when Solomon says, *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord* *. It sometimes denotes the passion of anger: *he that ruleth his spirit*, and *he that is slow to anger*, are used as synonymous terms †; and, *he that is hasty of spirit*, is opposed to him *that is slow to wrath* ‡. The spirit sometimes means a temper, disposition, or turn of mind, in general: thus we read of *an haughty spirit* ||, and of *an humble spirit* §.

* Prov. xx. 27. † Chap. xvi. 32. ‡ Chap. xiv. 29. § Chap. xvi. 18. || Ver. 19.

This is, perhaps, the meaning of the expression in my text: by him *that hath no rule over his own spirit*, may be meant, the person who hath no government of his passions; and of this person it is affirmed, that he *is like a city that is broken down and without walls*; he lies open to every vice to which exorbitant passion can expose him, and may therefore be compared to a city, the fortifications of which have been erased, and into which every enemy may enter at pleasure. But the expression may, without any impropriety, be taken in a sense somewhat more restrained, for a man's particular temper or predominant turn of mind; and Solomon may be understood to assert, that he who hath no command over his natural temper or peculiar bias, is in danger of running into every sin.

It is in this light that I propose to consider the text. I design to treat of the government of what we call a man's natural temper. It is a duty of great moment; it is an important part of the duty which we owe to ourselves; but it is a duty on which we bestow too little attention. The generality of men seem never to think, that it is either possible or requisite to lay any restraint upon themselves in this particular, but give full indulgence to their peculiar temper, and think it a sufficient excuse for what-

whatever this leads them to do amiss, that it is their temper, and they cannot help it. Even good men do not reflect sufficiently on the obligation of this duty, nor set themselves, with steadiness enough, to rectify their natural tempers. This renders it the more necessary to discourse professedly on this subject. In discoursing on it, I shall,

FIRST, Explain the origin and the nature of the variety of tempers among mankind;

SECONDLY, Evince the necessity of our governing, each his peculiar temper, by pointing out the ill consequences of neglecting it; and,

THIRDLY, Enquire what is implied in the government of a man's natural temper.

THE present discourse shall be employed in explaining the origin and the nature of the variety of tempers among mankind.

THAT God who is the creator of the world, delights in variety throughout all his works. The same God is the *Father of our spirits* *; and he has formed *them* also with considerable variety. It is a composed variety that takes place in the creation of God; it is consistent

* Heb. xii. 9.

with genuine simplicity and uniformity. All matter has the same essential properties; yet the forms into which God has moulded it, and the purposes to which he has applied the several parts of it, are infinitely different. In like manner, the souls of all men are indued with the same faculties; but from the degrees in which they possess these faculties, and from the proportions in which they are combined, there results an endless diversity of characters in the human species. Among the diversities of character of which men are susceptible, there is scarcely any more remarkable or more interesting, than that which belongs to the natural temper. This diversity may be increased by a difference in the education and culture which men receive, and in the habits which they contract; but it is not produced by these: it is founded in the original constitution; for it appears in children from their very birth, and it continues to distinguish persons who have received the same culture, and acquired the same habits. Both the temperament of the body and the turn of the mind contribute to form the peculiar bent: the latter requires principally to be regarded; for it influences the temper most directly; the former affects it only indirectly, by first affecting the turn of the mind: besides, it is only so far as the natural temper is founded in the turn of the mind,

mind, that it is capable of being governed. It arises both from the peculiar make of the understanding, and from the construction of the passions and active powers; but in most instances, the latter is its chief and most immediate cause, and that, either by the predominance of one passion in the constitution, or by the general tone of all the passions.

BEFORE we enter on a more particular investigation of these causes, it will be proper to premise one observation. Under this head, we consider the several tempers simply in themselves, and not either those excesses of them which are vicious, or that regulation of them which is virtuous. Yet it will be unavoidable often to speak of them by names which imply approbation or disapprobation, especially the latter. The reason is that, as all tempers are most obvious in their excesses, and as some are very apt to run into excess, we have in many instances no name for the temper itself as distinguished from the abuse of it. We must be on our guard against deception from this imperfection of language, and endeavour, as much as possible, to conceive every temper that shall be mentioned, as in itself indifferent, however readily it may on the one hand degenerate into vice, or however easily it may on the other hand be improved into virtue.

NO man is altogether destitute of any passion or affection belonging to human nature : but no man has all his passions balanced against one another with perfect exactness ; and no two men have them all proportioned to one another precisely in the same degree. Here is a fruitful source of varieties of temper. Whatever passion is predominant, gives a correspondent cast to the whole soul, and produces a suitable complexion.

SOME of our passions and affections are most directly subservient to our own private interest ; and some of them have other men for their objects : when those of the former sort prevail, the temper will be selfish and contracted ; when those of the latter class are predominant, the temper will be open and social. Many distinct affections belong to each of these classes ; and every affection belonging to either of them, produces a turn of temper congruous to itself.

WE daily meet with characters, both good and bad, which are founded in, and derive their peculiar complexion from an original and natural turn to those affections, whether sentiments or desires, which are properly selfish. Some, for instance, are prone to pride ; it assumes very different forms according to the causes

causes by which it is produced, and the expressions to which it most directly tends; and every form of it gives rise to a correspondent particularity of temper: hence the stately, the haughty, the arrogant, the insolent, the conceited, the vain, the dignified turn of mind, and many others, which language cannot mark with precision, but which the discerning eye readily distinguishes when they occur in the commerce of the world. Tempers as various, take their rise from an opposite propensity of soul to humility. A love of honours, power, preheminance, distinction, forms the temper of some; indifference about all these, is a striking feature in other characters. A high relish and a great fondness for what is pleasant, forms the basis of some characters; and insensibility to the impressions of pleasure, that of others. Some men are naturally turned to the love of riches, others to the neglect of them.

WHEN the malevolent passions have a tendency to predominate in the soul, they occasion all those diversities of temper, to which we apply the epithets, sour, sullen, morose, severe, captious, peevish, passionate, ill-humoured, and the like.

ON the contrary, the prevalence of the benevolent and kind affections of the heart, produces

duces a great variety of tempers, some of which we term the sweet, the gentle, the mild, the soft, the courteous, the tender, the sympathizing, the affectionate, the generous.

EVERY affection assumes different forms, according to the different situations in which its object is placed; it exerts itself in desire or aversion, in hope or fear, in joy or sorrow: but every man has not, by his constitution, an equal propensity to all these exertions of affection. Some are prone to desire; this renders them naturally keen, eager, or enterprising, and apt to become anxious and solicitous: others are more turned to aversion, and in consequence of this are naturally cautious, wary, circumspect, and liable to care, fretfulness, and disgust. Hope is predominant in some men, and fear in others: the former produces a temper of elation, confidence, and greater enterprise than would have arisen from the prevalence of desire alone: the latter produces a temper, cowardly, timid, dejected, suspicious, or foreboding. There is not perhaps any affection in the operation of which the opposite tempers now mentioned, may be seen more strongly contrasted, than the love of money: in one person, this principle shows itself by pushing for great advantages, embarking in extensive undertakings, and running every risk
for

for the sake of becoming very rich; he is actuated properly by the *desire* of wealth supported by forward *hopes*: the same attachment to money, makes another man cautious in all his schemes, sparing in every sort of expence, apt to forfeit great possible gain rather than expose himself to the hazard of any loss; this is the miser, his conduct proceeds either from *aversion* to, and *dread* of poverty, or from *desire* of wealth, continually checked and converted into timorous anxiety, by the predominance of *fear*. Some men have a natural propensity to run into joy; this occasions chearfulness and gaiety of temper, in all its forms: other men are most apt to be touched with sorrow; and they are constitutionally pensive, or gloomy, or melancholy. This difference accounts, in some degree, for a diversity of character which we may often observe: there are persons who have borne obscurity, poverty, and even affliction, with great composure and equanimity, but have been excessively elated and dissipated by prosperity; their natural chearfulness relieved the former, but being encouraged by the latter, ran into an extreme: on the other hand, there are persons who can bear prosperity with great moderation, but are perfectly sunk by adversity; their natural propensity is to sorrow; when it is irritated by distress, it overwhelms them: when

it

it is counteracted by the joys of a prosperous lot, it is restrained from every excess.

THUS all the affections and passions, according as one or another of them is predominant, tinge the whole soul with their own peculiar hue,

WE may observe farther, that very great diversities of temper may proceed from the same passion, only by its being predominant in different manners. The passionate temper, and the peevish, are extremely different; yet they both proceed from the predominance of the very same principle, sudden anger. Deliberate anger produces in those who have a propensity to it, many distinctions of temper unlike to both these. Whatever be the varieties of which any passion is susceptible in respect of its causes, its objects, its feeling, or its tendencies, the temper founded in that passion will be susceptible of all the same varieties,

IT may be remarked likewise, that some tempers proceed from the weakness of a particular disposition, more properly than from a predominance of the contrary. Courage, so far as it is constitutional, proceeds merely from the absence of fear. Impudence is not the prevalence of any positive affection, but only the
the

the want of shame. A reserved temper, at least in many instances, belongs to this head; the person is not actuated by those principles which lead others to a free communication of their sentiments and designs. That a distinction of temper should arise from a defect in one mental principle, cannot be surprising; some vices are altogether negative, they consist not in any bad affection, they indicate only the want of a good one; some virtues, in like manner, are not positive exertions of laudable affections, but arise from the restraint and proper government of such passions as tend to vice. The human soul is a complicated machine; its state and character are not determined by any one part of it, but result from the balancings, the relations, and the harmonious adjustment of all the parts. A want or a relative weakness in any one of the numerous parts of a clock, affects the soundness of the whole machine.

THIS principle suggests another observation. The several passions and affections are, in different men, combined in an infinite variety of ways; and every particular combination of them produces a distinct temper. Perhaps every temper, when it is analysed with the utmost accuracy, will be found, not to arise from the prevalence of a single affection, but

but to derive its form in some degree from the union of several. Thus in a compounded colour, different ingredients are mixed, and may be observed on attention; though one be so much predominant as to give it its common denomination. Thus fainter traces of several dispositions, are often discernible in a countenance, which yet receives its principal expression and general form from one affection. But in some tempers, the union of different principles is more obvious, and their influence more equal, than in others. To produce a temper turned to ridicule, both a prevalence of the malevolent passions, and a propensity to cheerfulness, must concur; without the latter, the temper would lead to mere invective and bitter railing. The united prevalence of joy and benevolent affection, forms a peculiarity of temper, different from what would result from the prevalence of either of these alone: if there be any of your acquaintance marked with this amiable peculiarity, you will know it by finding their mirth constantly intended to promote your pleasure, and by a winning readiness and alacrity accompanying all their good offices. In a modest temper, humility and a sense of propriety meet in almost equal measures. Affability is a temper which cannot be formed but by the union of many sentiments and affections which will be easily discovered

covered by attention to its appearances and exertions. Some affections are apter to mingle together into one temper, than others: but no affections are so opposite as not sometimes to be conjoined, to mitigate the contrarieties of each other, and then to be blended into one turn of soul. Hence arise those heterogeneous and absurd biases which we now and then meet with, and wonder at as singularities.

IN all these ways, the predominance of some passions and affections, or of others, is a source of many varieties of temper; of more indeed than language has distinct names for expressing, though we can discern each of them, when we meet with it in life.

BUT it is not only by the prevalence of some of them in comparison with the rest, that the passions produce diversities of temper among mankind: the general tone also of all the passions occasions a suitable peculiarity. A musical instrument acquires different tones by having all its strings wound up to different keys. The passions of different persons are as it were wound up to a variety of keys, and thence their souls derive distinct tones of temper. In some men, all the passions are high and strong, brisk and lively. Had these men no one passion more dominant than the rest,

this general vivacity of the passions would produce a peculiarity of temper congruous to itself. It is the cause of those distinctions of temper which can be characterized by sensibility, ardour, activity, vehemence, violence, impetuosity. In other men, all the passions are weak and languid. This renders the temper, in a degree proportioned to their dullness, insensible, insipid, sluggish, indolent, cool, or composed.

IN order to perceive in its full extent the influence of the general tone of the passions on the formation of the temper, we must observe that it may be combined with any predominant passion. Whatever peculiarity of temper a person derives from the prevalence of one passion, a high tone of all the passions will render more striking and more strongly marked, than it would have otherwise been. It is in men of warm passions, that the natural temper shows itself with the greatest force, and most precisely discriminated from all other turns of mind. When the passions are feeble, the temper of the soul, whatever be the passion of which it holds, may be compared to those faces, which having little characteristical, or distinctive, the painter finds difficulty in taking off. The tone of the passions admits many gradations; it is the immediate cause of as many

many particularities of temper : every gradation of which it is susceptible, may be united with any one predominant passion ; and every different conjunction will occasion a new cast of mind. Tempers arising from the predominance of the same passion, are, in many instances, so much diversified by the tone of the passions, as to be distinguished, even in common language, by peculiar names. The joyous temper is distinct from the chearful ; the affectionate from the gentle ; the prevailing passion is the same, but its tone is different.

THOUGH the passions be the most immediate causes of the varieties of temper, and though on that account they required our first and principal notice in explaining these varieties, yet it must be observed, not only that the understanding has some influence on every peculiarity of temper, but also that some peculiarities of it cannot be at all explained without taking into the account, the turn and degree of the understanding ; nay, that some peculiarities of temper are occasioned almost wholly by the form of the intellectual powers. Some men have a propensity to observe accurately, without any formed design, whatever comes in their way ; this propensity lays the foundation of an attentive turn : the habit of observing things confirms that turn : a heedless tem-

per arises from the want of this propensity. Some men can easily remove their attention from one object, and immediately employ it with as great closeness on another; some cannot readily disengage their thoughts from what has once engrossed them: the influence of these opposite casts of understanding, on the temper, is very conspicuous: in the man who can observe all the proprieties of quickly varying situations, in the man who can adapt himself successively to dissimilar companies, or in the man who can apply without distraction and with equal ardor to a multiplicity of occupations, you see the operation of the former; and you will as clearly perceive the operation of the latter in the contrary characters, which frequently occur in great variety. Some men have reasoning minds; whatever object is before them, they place it in every attitude, they view it in every light, they investigate all its consequences: this turn of understanding lays the foundation of a considerate, provident temper; the contrary turn, of a thoughtless, rash, improvident temper. There is a credulous, and there is a sceptical temper; they are founded in opposite turns of understanding: but these opposite turns generally imply the same intellectual weakness, an incapacity of perceiving the force of evidence quickly and precisely: this incapacity leads

one man to admit all the evidence that is proposed to him, by hindering him from perceiving its defects; and it leads another to reject all the evidence that is offered, by rendering him insensible of its strength. On this account, what we often remark as surprising and unaccountable, that credulity and incredulity are found in the same characters, both in very high degrees, that the greatest sceptics and infidels on some subjects, show the weakest easiness of faith on others, is natural, and even unavoidable. A sound discernment of the real force of evidence would prevent both extremes. When the understanding is clear and decisive, it lays the foundation of a firm and determined temper: an inability to form a clear opinion, produces fickleness and inconsistency.

For explaining the variety of tempers, it will be proper to make another observation. The same temper may, in different men, proceed from different causes. It was formerly observed that some men are composed in adversity, but elated by prosperity, and others moderate in prosperity, but dejected by adversity, and that the difference may often be accounted for, from the predominance of cheerfulness in the former, and of sorrow in the latter: when it proceeds from this cause, the

elation of the former shows itself in giddiness and levity, and the dejection of the latter, in melancholy. But the difference proceeds in many instances from another cause: when pride is predominant in the constitution, adversity may be no more than it requires to check, to moderate, and to restrain it within proper bounds; prosperity inflames it, and gives it scope in insolence and arrogance: on the contrary, when there is a strong propensity to humility, it may need prosperity to counteract it; adversity sinks it into depression, meanness, or pusillanimity. In some instances both causes operate, and impress on the character traces suitable to each. Eagerness of temper may arise from a great predominance of one passion, or it may arise from a high tone of all the passions. A grave temper we should at first sight be apt to impute, in every instance, to the want of a propensity to joy; yet it is often found without any predominance of sorrow: in some cases it proceeds from a moderate tone of all the passions, in others from a thoughtful, considerate turn of mind; there are cases in which it has causes different from all these. One cause of a reserved temper was mentioned already, the want of those dispositions which lead men to communicate their sentiments: but it may proceed from very different principles, from modesty, for instance,

instance, or from suspiciousness, or from fullness, or from pride. The source of fickleness and inconstancy is sometimes weakness of judgment; sometimes timidity; and sometimes the keenness of all the passions, hurrying a man continually into new pursuits according as they happen to be excited in their turns. A temper of rashness and precipitation may proceed from an improvident judgment, from the absence of fear and caution, or from the violence of any passion. But still, though tempers thus proceeding from different causes, are often so similar as to come under the same common denomination, yet they are not precisely the same. They are confounded by the generality, but a judicious eye can distinguish them. They are like those faces which have a strong resemblance in their general cast, but differ considerably in their particular features. There is a peculiarity in each, congruous to its own cause. To discern this peculiarity, and to perceive the cause from which it is derived, is absolutely necessary for our forming a right judgment concerning a person's temper. When the causes of similar tempers are very analogous, the distinction of these tempers may be very delicate, and will require great acuteness to perceive it. But it is often obvious enough; similar tempers sometimes arise from

very unlike causes, nay from such as are opposite; when they do, the dullest can discriminate them: a temper of firmness arises from a clear perception of the reasons of a certain conduct; obstinacy may arise from an incapacity of perceiving these reasons; both imply constancy; but none will be at a loss to discern the difference between them. Generally, however, the principles which produce similar tempers, have some analogy, some fitness to coalesce. When they have, some degree of them all often appears in the temper, though a greater degree of one of them gives it the predominant tinge.

As similar tempers may proceed from dissimilar causes, so even opposite tempers may proceed from the same cause. Under a former head, we have already found an example of this; we have found the sceptical temper, and the credulous, ultimately resolved into the same imbecility of understanding, an inability of clearly discerning the real force of evidence. This inability likewise gives rise to an obstinate temper in some, to a wavering temper in others: one is immoveable in all his designs, because he is incapable of discerning the strength of those reasons which should persuade him to alter them; another is fickle in them all, because he cannot see the weakness
of

of the reasons which are produced against them.

SUCH are the general causes of the diversity of tempers among mankind. They are capable of numberless combinations; and every combination of them produces a distinct temper. As no two plants are exactly alike, as no two human faces are absolutely undistinguishable, so no two tempers are perfectly the same. Every man has *his own spirit*, his peculiar temper, by which he differs from every other man. To enumerate all the peculiarities of temper is impossible. What has been said, will be sufficient to prepare us, both for perceiving the necessity, and for understanding the manner, of governing our own temper. It may likewise suggest useful reflections to us: I shall conclude this discourse by mentioning a few of them.

I. EACH of us should study to know his own particular temper. *Know thyself*, was one of the most approved precepts of ancient wisdom. *Know ye not your own selves** is the exhortation of a Christian apostle. The knowledge of our natural temper is one important part of the knowledge of ourselves.

* Cor. xiii. 5.

Our temper has an extensive influence on our conduct, the government of it is of great moment; but for governing it, a previous knowledge of it is absolutely necessary. Our temper affects our judgments, as well as our conduct; to the gloomy, there is nothing in nature chearful; to the gay, religion seems to require no restraint, or self-denial; every thing appears provoking to the peevish; every peculiarity of temper, if it be ungoverned, is a jaundiced eye, which tinges all things with its own colour, and will make us dupes to some prejudice of its own complexion. *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of**, was a severe rebuke which our Saviour gave the sons of Zebedee, on one occasion: if we be ignorant of our real temper, we fall under the rebuke. Every person with whom we converse, quickly discovers our temper, and can make his advantage of it: it is shameful that ourselves alone should not discover it; we can make the greatest advantage by the discovery. Many are so totally ignorant of themselves, that you shall find persons, every day, disclaiming in the most explicit terms, that very temper which all the world knows to be, in a palpable excess, their own. The passionate man praises his own weakness; the implacable

* Luke ix. 55.

ble thanks God, that he is not given to resentment; the contentious applauds his own love of peace; the giddy admires his own sedateness; the obstinate declares himself the readiest of all men to receive conviction; the proud, the assuming, the over-bearing magnifies his condescension, his lowliness, and his affability. I am persuaded, the mention of these instances has called up to your thoughts, living characters of your acquaintance. But it may be that some of yourselves have been thought of by others, as fit examples of this self-ignorance. Labour each of you to know your peculiar bias: it is by careful attention to the workings of your hearts and the actions of your lives, that you can learn it; you will find it mingling with them all, and giving them a correspondent cast and manner. Remark its tendency; this is what you should set yourselves to regulate or counteract: observe what are the ill effects which it is aptest to produce; these are what you must endeavour to prevent. Investigate its cause; enquire what is the particular principle or disposition, from the predominance of which it proceeds. To examine the several sources of the diversity of tempers, is entertaining; it is useful also, as it prepares us for discovering the source of our own temper; but it is this discovery that is *immediately* improving, it is the
the

the application of the general examination to this purpose, that is of chief importance. The knowledge of the real cause of our peculiar temper is necessary for the government of it. In every case the prevention or the cure of a disease can be effected only by removing its cause.

2. A PROPER sense of the endless variety of tempers in the human species, would lead us to make greater allowance for the sentiments and conduct of others, than we often do. To ourselves we often arrogate indulgence, on account of our peculiar temper, much greater than can be reasonable: to others, we generally give no indulgence on account of the peculiarity of tempers. Did we consider, how difficult it is to govern the natural temper, did we reflect how imperfectly we often govern our own, and how often it betrays us into what is faulty; and were we at the same time disposed to judge and to act equitably with respect to others; we could not fail to make great allowances even for the real faults into which their temper leads them. Great as they may be in the sight of God, our judgment of them should be mild, and our conduct in consequence of them, indulgent and forbearing; we may find in ourselves, sometimes an excuse for them, always an extenuation of them. But

WC,

we, on the contrary, often form an unfavourable opinion of others, entertain hatred of them, or treat them ill, merely for such differences in their natural temper as are really free from vice. The grave and the melancholy are apt to reckon the most innocent cheerfulness and mirth profane and ungodly. The gay and cheerful too readily charge the serious with grimace and hypocrisy. The man of openness shuns him who is naturally reserved, as artful, cunning, and designing. Examples might easily be multiplied. Have we not candour enough to recollect, what is so extremely obvious, that the tempers of others are very different from ours? Would you find fault with others, because the features of their faces are not the same with those of your own? The tempers of men are as various as their faces; they can no more eradicate the peculiarity of their tempers, than destroy the distinction of their looks. They cannot but do the very same action in different manners. By attention to this one principle, how many differences, animosities, dislikes, misconstructions, and ill offices would be prevented among men? how much would the virtues of forbearance, candour, and mutual love, be promoted?

3. THE amazing diversity of tempers in the human species, is a striking instance of the
con-

contrivance and wisdom of the God who made us. Variety combined with uniformity, may be considered as the very characteristic of design: a perfect combination of them is an indication of perfect wisdom. Of such combination, obvious through the whole creation, the endless variety of natural tempers, in creatures who have all the same essential powers, and produced by so delicate variations of these powers, is an illustrious example. It proclaims that God our father is wise; it proves that the creator of mankind *is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working* *. Let us admire, let us adore his wisdom manifested in the constitution of our own nature, and in this particular part of it; our thoughts, our feelings, our motions, may every moment put us in mind to adore it; let us celebrate the wisdom of our maker, with praises suitable to it, saying with David, *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well* †.

* Isa. xxviii. 29.

† Psal. cxxxix. 14.

S E R M O N X.

THE NECESSITY OF GOVERNING THE NATURAL TEMPER.

PROV. xxv. 28.

*He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like
a city that is broken down and without walls.*

IN the last discourse, I explained the origin and the nature of the variety of tempers which is found among mankind. In this discourse, I propose to evince the necessity of our governing, each his own peculiar temper.

Is it, then, needful to evince the necessity of a man's governing his own temper? Every man acknowledges that all others ought to govern their tempers, and complains of them when they do not. By this, every man acknowledges that the government of the temper is a duty of indispensable obligation. Yet there is very great need to enforce it; for every man almost pleads a privilege to neglect it in his
own

own particular case. As long as men do this, it never will be practised. It is not our owning a duty to be incumbent upon others, but our perceiving it to be incumbent upon ourselves, that will lead us to the performance of it. That we may perceive, how much it is the duty of every one of us, to govern his own temper, let us attend to the ill effects of neglecting to govern it. They are pointed out by an expressive figure in the text: *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls*; he has no security against abandoning himself to every vice. This is an alarming motive to the government of the temper. If the neglect of it has any tendency to vice, it must have a very strong tendency. The influence of our particular temper runs through our whole life, and mixes with every action of it; the consequences of an ungoverned temper must therefore be very extensive; the whole of our conduct must be vitiated. This observation sets the importance of governing the temper in a very striking light; if it be at all a duty, it is a momentous duty. For evincing that it is a duty, it will be sufficient to show, that the neglect of it leads to vice; and in showing this with the fullest evidence, there will be little difficulty.

EVERY

EVERY natural temper is innocent in itself; it may likewise be made conducive to virtue: but every temper is, at the same time, apt to degenerate into some vice. To make the temper subservient to virtue, or even to preserve it innocent, attention, and care in restraining and modelling it, are absolutely necessary; just as the soil requires culture in order to its producing a crop of useful grain: but as the ground, whenever it is not cultivated, runs into wildness, and nourishes useless or noxious weeds; so, that our natural temper may lead us into the vices suited to it, and occasion us all the misery involved in them, nothing is necessary but to leave it to itself, to neglect to rule it. Our becoming abandoned to *these* vices at least, is the necessary consequence of the neglect. The strictest government of the temper, which our imperfection permits, cannot prevent our being seduced by these vices in some instances: where there is no government at all, the man must be enslaved by them.

THERE is not a single vice to which some turn of temper does not directly tend; and therefore there is not a single vice into which one man or another will not be led, by neglecting to govern his natural temper. This is, in a very great measure, the cause of all the variety of vicious characters which dis-

grace the human species. Some have been led by particular causes, into courses of vice, from which their natural temper was abhorrent ; but the greatest part addict themselves to the vices which most fall in with it. There is some vice which easily falls in with every turn of temper, and unavoidably arises from the indulgence of it.

NEED I point out minutely, the vices to which the indulgence of a contracted and selfish temper naturally leads ? Will it not be readily acknowledged by all, that vice is the certain consequence of the indulgence ? It will be only difficult for the generality to form a conception of a contracted temper so carefully corrected as not to include vice in the very idea of it. Selfishness is a term which we never use in a favourable sense ; a certain proof that a propensity to it is very apt to become vicious. The selfish affections are various ; they turn to different objects : but it requires the strictest government to prevent a temper founded on the prevalence of any of them, from degenerating into the correspondent vice, ambition, or vanity, or avarice, or sensuality and the love of pleasure. These are all the names of vices, and of vices which, when they rise to a great height, and are indulged without controul, render the characters detestable, in which they

are the leading principles. We regard *pride* with a somewhat less unfavourable eye, than any of the selfish *desires*; we allow that there are species of it which are innocent, or even virtuous; but some epithet must be applied to mark them: it is an affection so apt to become vicious, and so frequently found in a faulty form, that *pride* without an epithet always denotes a vice. To its excesses, names are appropriated, expressive of the greatest baseness. A man naturally turned to *pride*, without governing his temper, becomes haughty, or arrogant, or insolent. One superciliously despises those with whom he lives; the stateliness of his carriage proclaims how much he reckons them below him; he disdains to take notice of them. Another is perpetually claiming extravagant respect; he is not satisfied with his own opinion of his superiority; he demands that you should own it; he anxiously displays it; he makes a show of his riches before the poor man, and of his pomp before the mean; if you refuse him homage, if you yield it in any degree of moderation, you affront him, and he becomes your enemy. One affects affability and lowliness, but he forces you to feel that he thinks he is condescending very far in treating you as his equal. Another is overbearing, he reckons you much his inferior, he thinks you dependent upon him; perhaps he

Q studies

studies to render you dependent, at any rate he treats you as if you were, he mortifies you with all the petulance of insult. Such characters are detestable; and they arise infallibly from ungoverned pride. Even humility, of all the private affections the most approveable, if it predominated in the temper, and were put under no regulation, would sink into a feeble, a mean, and an abject spirit, which is blameable in itself, and chills every great and worthy effort of the soul.

It is still less necessary to enter into a long detail of the detestable vices which spring from a temper founded in a propensity to any of the malevolent passions. It will universally be confessed that such tempers, if not very carefully corrected, must produce characters deservedly odious. They lead to vices which spread misery through society, and which overwhelm the person himself with greater misery than he brings upon those around him. Habitual peevishness, producing fretfulness on every the slightest occasion, putting one out of humour with every person and every thing, creating incessant uneasiness to those who are connected with him, eating out the enjoyment of life, is the natural effect of a temper founded on a propensity to anger, though accompanied with the weakest tone of passion. The same

pro-

penfity joined to a higher tone of paffion, leads to vices of a ftill more pernicious tendency, to licentious reproaches, extravagant menaces, vehemence, rage, and fury; it haraffes inferiors and dependents, it provokes and alienates the deareft friends, it ftains converfation with rudeneff and brutality, in a moment it precipitates into injuries which can never be repaired, and into crimes which entail bitter repentance on the whole fucceeding part of life, But when the propenfity is, not to fhort fits of paffion frequently recurring, but to permanent and deliberate anger, the indulgence of it produces the blackeft vices: it renders the whole behaviour captious and perverfe, it infects every action with harfhneff and bitternelf, it fettles into malice, it grows up into envy, it exerts itfelf in revenge, it breaks forth into rancour, it degenerates into cruelty, it employs power in creating mifery and fpreading defolation, it takes occafion even from religion for perfecution and bloody maffacre,

BUT alas, even thofe beft of tempers in which the kind affections prevail, will be productive of very destructive vices, if they are not governed with care. Every day we meet with perfons who have become vicious by indulging a temper of this kind. One man is fociable; he indulges his love of company,

Q 3

and

and he becomes dissipated, and neglects every material duty of life; he falls into ill company, and he is corrupted. Another is soft in his nature, and cannot bear to disoblige; he falls in with vicious men, to oblige them he grants whatever they are pleased to ask, he consents to what he knows to be wrong, he sinneth with them. Good nature, it is even commonly observed, exposes a person to dangerous temptations. A sympathizing temper often degenerates into weaknesses greatly blameable: generosity of temper readily shoots up into prodigality and ruinous extravagance: and the warm and affectionate heart needs to be held in with a steady rein, else it will rush forward into unlawful testimonies of kindness, and unrighteous acts of friendship.

In whatever way our temper most disposes the several passions and affections to exert themselves, it will, without regulation, prove the source of peculiar vices. When the propensity to desire renders the temper keen and eager, if we lay it under no restraint, if we be not at pains both to direct it to proper objects, and to moderate the degree of it, it must engage us in trifling and vicious pursuits; in respect of the object of our pursuit, whether pleasure, profit, or power, it must render us craving and insatiable, ever unsatisfied with what we
have

have obtained, wishing and plotting for more; and in respect of the means of prosecution, it must render us impetuous and violent, regardless of the bounds of right, impatient of every delay and opposition; we shall fret and rage at the disappointment of wishes which ought never to have been formed, and the inefficacy of means which ought never to have been employed. Is the opposite propensity to aversion indulged? Every thing wears a gloomy aspect, and is viewed on its darkest side: we act as if we were resolved never to be pleased; we search for occasions of disgust, regret, and uneasiness, and we find them in every object; every gentle affection is banished from the breast; discontent, fretfulness, and ill humour become habitual. A temper of confidence easily degenerates into presumption; it engages a man in impracticable enterprises, and makes him sure of success in them; it makes him look on impossibilities as merely difficulties; he hopes, and he strains every nerve to overcome them, he attempts even the most unlawful means; he is plunged into disappointment when he least thinks of it, hurried into all the vices which disappointment produces in the sanguine, and overwhelmed with anguish proportioned to the elevation of his former hopes. Another gives full scope to the timidity of his natural dispo-

sition; he dares not attempt any thing that is worthy, the slightest danger can terrify him into the basest conduct; he falls into all the sins and into all the miseries which belong to the cowardly, the suspicious, the jealous, the cunning, the desponding. The sorrowful cast of mind, become excessive, renders even a man's virtues forbidding, and disposes him to vices which can only torment him. A chearful temper is amiable: but when it is ungoverned, it is the source of many vicious characters; the man who abandons himself to dissolute mirth and jollity, without regard to the propriety of subjects or of situations; the person who trifles in unceasing levity, incapable of serious thought or of a moment's sedate behaviour; the insignificant, fluttering in a continual round of gay amusements, at leisure for none of the duties of life; the wretch who runs from pleasure to pleasure, and gives himself up to false and riotous joys; all these characters and many more, spring in a great measure from chearfulness of temper indulged without controul.

WHEN the general tone of the passions is high, it exposes a man to all the vices in their turn, which can arise from the excess of any passion, and most to those which arise from the strength of his ruling passion. When it gives too great sensibility to the temper, it renders a
man

man prone to all the weakneſſes which naturally ſpring from love or hatred, from joy or ſorrow, from any of the emotions of the ſoul, immoderately indulged, according to the different ways in which his ſenſibility happens ſucceſſively to be touched. When it produces violence and impetuofity, it needs but an occaſion to hurry a perſon into all the crimes which anger, malice, revenge, extravagant deſire, preſumptuous hope, or any the moſt reſtleſs paſſion in human nature, can ſuggeſt. If the man who has a keen and ardent temper, turn not to virtue, he muſt be bold and uncontroulable in all his vices: but to virtue he cannot be ſuppoſed to turn, if he have *no rule over his own ſpirit*; for virtue is always founded in ſelf-government. When, on the contrary, the paſſions are low and languid, and render a man unfeeling, fluggiſh, and inactive, if he be at no pains to counteract this diſpoſition, is it poſſible that he can avoid the ſins of omiſſion, the vices of neglect? Of the meltings of compaſſion, of the efforts of benevolence, of the *labours of love* *, of the fervours of devotion, of the actings of zeal for God and goodneſs, of all the alacrity and vigorous energies of virtue, he is incapable, until he raiſe himſelf above the natural inſipidity of his temper,

* 1 Theſſ. i. 3. Heb. vi. 10.

If he may be harmless, he cannot be useful. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep *; the slothful hideth his hand in his bosom, it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth †; his hands refuse to labour ‡; his way is an hedge of thorns ||.

It will not be necessary for our purpose, to examine what are the vices congenial to every one of the varieties of temper; which were formerly pointed out as arising from the several mental powers, either separately or differently combined together. From the instances already produced, it is sufficiently plain, that every turn of temper leads naturally to some vice or another. To these instances let us however subjoin a very few more. Courage may very readily degenerate into fierceness; reserve into fullness; and openness of temper into such unwariness as betrays the secrets or the interests of the dearest friend. A prudent turn of mind is easily corrupted into cunning; and the smallest propensity to thoughtlessness may terminate in the most destructive rashness and precipitation. Credulity lays a man open to many means of seduction; and a tendency to doubt may grow up into such scepticism as shall enervate every principle of virtue, and annihilate every motive to the practice of it. A

* Prov. xix. 13. † Chap. xxvi. 13. ‡ Chap. xxi. 25. || Chap. xv. 19.

firm and steady temper is manly; but if it be ungoverned and undirected, it may produce obstinacy, rendering a man inflexible in his worst actions and designs, irreclaimable in all his vices. The opposite temper can scarcely, by any pains, be kept from producing some degree of fickleness and inconstancy, which is itself a blemish; and if no pains be taken to fix it, it will render a person contemptible and little, incapable of that persevering goodness, which alone can be either useful to men or acceptable to God.

THE same temper, it may be farther observed, will lead a man, with equal readiness, into opposite vices in opposite situations. There is an example very common, and very commonly taken notice of. The same littleness of mind renders a man insolent in prosperity, and abject in adversity. A man of this turn obtains a fortune, and becomes rude to his superiors, contemptuous to his equals, and oppressive to his inferiors; he runs into all extravagance, he dissipates his fortune, and he is mean and shameless in his poverty. Shimei casting stones at David and his servants, going after him, and cursing as he went, calling him a bloody man, and a man of Belial*; and

* a Sam. xvi. 3, 6, 7.

Shimei,

Shimei, a few days after, on a reverse of David's fortune, *the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet him, falling down before him*, and deprecating punishment †; is the very same character.

THAT vice, be it what it will, to which our particular temper directly leads us, is an enemy already advanced to the gates of the heart; and if it finds the heart *like a city without walls*, it enters at its pleasure, we can make no resistance. If we have *no rule over our own spirit*, if we do not carefully govern our natural temper, we cannot avoid indulging that vice. But the indulgence of any one vice, is inconsistent with true goodness of character; it forfeits our future happiness; it excludes us from the favour of God. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* *. If, therefore, our becoming a prey to this one vice, were the only effect of our neglecting to govern our natural temper, it might be sufficient to deter us from the neglect.

BUT this is very far from being the whole effect of our neglecting to govern our natural temper: the man who ruleth not his spirit,

† 2 Sam. xix. 18, 19, 20.

* Jam. ii. 10.

does not merely become enslaved to one vice; in consequence of this, he is open to every vice, and certainly shall be led into very many vices. Every ruling sin will require from the man who lives in the indulgence of it, the commission of many others, for its support, for its gratification, or for disguising and concealing it: and if that sin has by its suitability to an ungoverned natural temper, obtained dominion over us, it will not be in our power to abstain from any of these others, whenever they become necessary for these purposes. This might be illustrated and confirmed by a long detail; but it is not needful to produce many instances; it lies open to the observation of every man, in the daily course of the world. Few vices at their first approach smile so sweetly, or so much put on the look of innocence, as the love of pleasure: but let a man, by giving a loose to his natural temper, be once abandoned to the love of pleasure, and the vices are innumerable by which he must necessarily be contaminated; it quickly brings on a disrelish of every enjoyment and of every sentiment superior to the gratifications of sensuality and the suggestions of appetite; no office of kindness, no exertion in doing good must be expected from the sensualist; the labour of performing it would break in upon the indolence and destroy the gaiety of the present

present hour; his pleasures are expensive, in supporting them he dissipates all the wealth that is his own, he covets that of other men as the means of continuing his riots, he becomes the slave of avarice, he goes beyond the lowest miser in rapacity, extortion, rapine, and dishonest arts; gratitude to a benefactor, fidelity to a friend, the claims of innocence, the sacred rights of marriage, often stand between him and the indulgence on which his soul is set; they must all be overleaped, all the stratagems of seduction, all the methods of perfidy, must be practised; the tyrant of his heart demands it. This very tyrant got possession of David's heart for a little while, and it led him first meanly to attempt imposing a spurious offspring on his valiant, faithful, and zealous servant, and afterwards basely to lay a snare for his life, and expose him to certain destruction in bravely serving him; if it could produce deeds so foul in a short period of usurpation, what a series of crimes will it not produce when it is quietly settled on the throne for life? Vanity is, perhaps, in itself one of the most harmless of the vicious passions, it is reckoned the object rather of ridicule, than of indignation; but let it predominate in the temper, and be indulged without reserve, it will lead to vices well deserving of our most serious indignation; it will prompt

a man to falsehood and lies in order to raise admiration of his abilities or his exploits; it will hurry him on to an expence of ostentation which his fortune cannot bear, to meanness and injustice for supporting it, and to every wile, however unlawful, for hiding the poverty which it has produced; it will make him betray a trust, sacrifice the rights of others, or venture on the basest actions, when by so doing he can display his importance to the great, or catch the applauses of the multitude; it will seduce him to deny the most momentous truths, to laugh at the most sacred obligations, to propagate the most pernicious maxims, that he may appear superior to the vulgar. Generosity is an amiable temper: but the man who has allowed the generosity of his nature to lead him into profusion, will soon become guilty of all the vices which seem necessary for retrieving his distressed circumstances, and will find his heart embittered against mankind, by the ingratitude of those on whom he injudiciously lavished his favours. When such faults of temper as these can beget so many and so heinous vices, it is surely needless to trace out the innumerable progeny of those turns of temper which tend still more strongly to multiply crimes: every page, for instance, of the history of mankind is full of the enormities of all different kinds, which
have

have sprung from the love of power degenerated into boundless ambition; and the experience of all ages has verified the apostle's assertion, that *the love of money is the root of all evil**,

BUT it deserves to be particularly remarked, that as soon as the misgovernment of natural temper has subjected a man to one predominant or ruling vice, he is no longer proof against even such vices as are in themselves most opposite to that very temper. To a person who is under the dominion of any one vice, mere temper is not a security against any crime. Every one's observation will supply him with instances of persons who, being engaged in one vicious course, have by it been led into sins most contrary to their nature, and at the thought of which they would have shuddered, if their darling sin had not demanded them, and produced insensibility to their baseness; with instances of the soft and gentle being brought to act with cruelty, and even to venture upon murder; of the benevolent and kind-hearted labouring to bring ruin upon those who happened to stand in the way of some unlawful project; of the generous, in the prosecution of some bad design, stooping to the most for-

* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

did actions; of the candid and open betrayed into schemes of artifice, dissimulation, and falshood; of the timid rushing forward into the most dangerous crimes. Hence a reflection which is often made, and is so obvious as to occur to the least discerning, of a person who has become addicted to any vice, that it has changed his very nature.

THUS the man who abandons himself to that one vice which arises from the corruption of his natural temper, is from that moment in danger of every sin. Every predominant vice requires as great a number of other vices to be subservient to it in the course of a wicked life, as the ministers whom any tyrant can stand in need of, to be the instruments of his cruelty, rapacity, and lusts. In consequence of indulging that vice which suits his particular temper, the sinner becomes polluted with many acts of almost all sins, and depraved by confirmed habits of very many sins. By being *like a city without walls*, destitute of defence against any sin, he becomes *like a city broken down*, reduced to ruins, desolated, uninhabited, and uninhabitable; and, as the prophet foretold of ancient Babylon, *wild beasts of the desert lie there, and their houses are full of doleful creatures, and owls dwell there, and satyrs dance there, and the wild beasts of*

the islands cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces * : every thing regular, fair, and worthy is destroyed out of his heart, he is filled with all iniquity.

AFTER the detail which has been given of the consequences of our neglecting to govern our natural temper, can it be necessary to use many words for dissuading us from the neglect? Can any of you think of pleading your temper as an excuse for any vice? Do you not see that because your temper leans to that particular vice, you ought for that very reason to guard against it with the greater anxiety and care? On that side your danger is most imminent, and therefore to that side your quickest and your most constant vigilance should be directed. Can you imagine that God requires you not to employ all the care that is necessary for governing your natural temper? To imagine it, were to suppose that he gives every man allowance to live in the practice of some one sin; for every peculiarity of temper indulged without controul, it has been clearly shewn, terminates naturally and inevitably, in a correspondent vice. Nay, to imagine it, were to suppose that God has granted unlimited permission to commit all sins in some particu-

Isai. xliii, 21, 22.

lar situations: for there is no sin, which the predominant vice springing from the indulgence of a man's natural temper, may not at times demand. Such imaginations are absurd and impious; and therefore it must be true, that God requires each of us to *rule his own spirit*, to restrain and regulate the prevailing bias of his nature. The work is difficult, very difficult: but since it is a necessary and important work, its difficulty ought only to augment our care and diligence in performing it. Its difficulty will be no excuse for our neglecting it; it only renders it a very substantial part of our probation and moral discipline. In spite of our greatest care and our most assiduous application, the natural temper will, I fear, start forth now and then into vice; the merciful God, who *knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust* †, will doubtless reckon this among the infirmities of our nature, to which he extends his paternal pity; but it will be only with respect to those who sincerely exert themselves in opposing and subduing it; those who bestow no pains upon it, he will hold to be without excuse, and to them he will impute all the corruption and all the crimes which arise from the misgovernment of their temper. In this as in every

† Psal. ciii. 14.

other case, God's mercy is great to the failings of the upright, but he sheweth no mercy to any wicked transgressors. Can you think without horror, of the baseness of those multiplied vices with which the habitual misgovernment of your natural temper must in time overspread your souls? Can you think without terror of the accumulated guilt of all these vices, and of the punishment to which they must expose you? Possessed and actuated by these emotions, be roused to every exertion for removing the faulty propensity of your nature. It is like a subtle poison pervading all the powers of your souls, mixing itself with all your sentiments and actions, and infecting them; it envenoms the foundation, and vitiates all the issues of life. While you neglect to govern your natural temper, all your endeavours to avoid or to mortify the vices which spring from it, will be but like lopping off a few twigs, which the vigour of the root will enable quickly to grow again, perhaps stronger and more luxuriant than before: it is only by setting yourselves at once to govern it, to rectify all its perversities, that you can lay the axe to the root of the tree, and effectually kill all the branches. Thus shall we in the easiest and most effectual manner, by the grace of God, render our hearts pure, our conduct blameless, consistent, and uniform, and ourselves acceptable

acceptable to him, and fit for the future state of perfection and happiness. How we ought to govern our temper, so as to answer this important purpose, shall be explained in the next discourse.

THE MANNER OF GOVERNING THE
NATURAL TEMPER.

PROV. xiv. 29.

He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

THESE are several things are by a multitude of words rendered infinitely obscure, and that every man is wanting in his temper is equally ignorant in order to improve his being by his passions, and only into the state which is just, for him, by means of them, into good every day, and consequently, I am persuaded, that has been already shown, in the discourse, it remains on this subject, and shall by the subjects of this discourse, to show, how this duty ought

R 2 SERMON

to be applied in the government of the natural temper, or in a man's having rule over himself, &c.

S E R M O N XI.

THE MANNER OF GOVERNING THE NATURAL TEMPER.

PROV. xxv. 28.

*He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like
a city that is broken down and without walls,*

THAT men's natural tempers are by a multitude of causes rendered infinitely various; and that every man's governing his own temper is absolutely necessary in order to prevent his being by it precipitated, not only into the vices which suit it most, but also, by means of them, into almost every vice, and consequently is his indispensable duty, has been already shewn, in two discourses. It remains on this subject, and shall be the business of this discourse, to shew, how this duty ought to be performed; to explain, what is implied in the government of the natural temper, or in a man's having *rule over his own spirit*.

It implies not, that a man destroy his peculiar temper. It is the business of government, not to exterminate the subjects, but to direct, to animate, and to restrain them properly. To extirpate one's natural temper, is impossible. It is a distinguishing character, impressed on every soul by the hand of the Almighty, which the power of man can no more erase, than it can efface the distinctive characters of the several kinds of plants and animals, and reduce them all to one kind.

If it were possible for a man to destroy his peculiar temper, it would not be necessary, it would be even pernicious. It is for the best purposes, that the all-wise God hath distributed among mankind so great a diversity of tempers: could we destroy that diversity, all these purposes would be defeated. The beautiful variety which at present prevails among the human species, would disappear; an insipid sameness of character would succeed. Men would no longer be disposed to different pursuits and manners of acting, nor fitted for uniting closely in society: all would act in the same manner; each would be fit only for solitude or for independence; all the delights and all the benefits of social connexion and social commerce would be at an end.

AMONG all the varieties of temper which men possess, there is not one inconsistent with virtue, there is not one which duty requires us to endeavour to extirpate. We are apt to consider some turns of natural temper as in themselves virtuous or vicious. The reason is, that the affections from whose predominance some tempers result, are naturally friendly to virtue, and lead to it when they are cherished; and those in the predominance of which other tempers consist, tend most directly to vice, and lead to it whenever they are indulged. The former tempers, such for instance as hold of the benevolent affections, are in themselves desirable and amiable; the latter, such for example as proceed from anger, or from any of the selfish principles, are disagreeable, render the practice of some virtues difficult, and put men in great danger of becoming vicious. Our proneness to run into the mistake is the greater, because the names given to tempers of the one kind often imply their improvement into virtue, and the names given to those of the other kind express that turpitude which belongs to them only when they have degenerated into vice. But as the former, considered only as natural biases, have no real virtue, so the latter, considered in the same light, are not really vicious. It is an unhappiness to be marked with them, but it is not

sinful in itself. They are very liable to abuse; and the abuse of them is sinful: but the best natural temper may likewise be abused; and the abuse of it too is sinful.

BUT though it be neither possible nor necessary to *extirpate* the natural temper, it is both possible and necessary to *govern* it. We every day meet with persons who, from good breeding, or from prudence, can disguise their temper and keep it from shewing itself, not on one occasion, but on many occasions and through a long course of time; could not, then, better principles enable them to correct it? We actually see some persons who have corrected very bad natural tempers, to a great degree; their closest and most intimate friends perceive little starts of them on particular emergencies; but the general tenor of their behaviour retains no vestige of their constitutional fault of temper; most of their acquaintance can scarcely believe that ever they were subject to it. A physiognomist pretended to discover by his art, that the great Athenian philosopher Socrates was addicted to vices so opposite to his whole conduct and character, that all who knew him were disposed to ridicule the pretensions of the physiognomist as absurd: but, to their astonishment, Socrates declared, that he was, by his constitutional bias, prone to all the vices which

which had been imputed to him, and that it was only by philosophy that he had got the better of them. Would it not be shameful, if many Christians could not make a similar declaration? By the power of Christian principles, the government of the natural temper may certainly be carried to a great height of perfection. Let us consider what it implies, and carefully set ourselves to practise it. The government of our peculiar temper may be comprehended in three particulars,—that we restrain it from breaking out into sin,—that we render it subservient to the practice of virtue,—and that we incorporate it with all our virtues.

1. THE first object of a man's care, in *ruling his own spirit*, is to restrain his natural bias, so that it may not become vicious, or lead him into sin. The least that can be incumbent on us, is to keep it within such bounds that it may continue innocent: but even this will be very difficult. The natural temper may be compared to a constitutional proneness to any bodily distemper, which it is possible to prevent from actually breaking out into that distemper, or at least from breaking out into other than short and moderate fits of it, consistent with an habitual state of health: but this can be obtained only by constant attention to the constitution, by unintermitted care to observe

observe a regimen fit to counteract it; if it be in the least degree neglected the distemper will break out with violence, and become mortal. In like manner, to prevent our natural temper from bringing us under the dominion of those sins which are suitable to it, will require the most intense and unwearied diligence in opposing every irregular tendency, and restraining every blameable exertion of that temper, in avoiding every action which can confirm it, and every object and opinion which can increase its faulty bias, and in pursuing such a conduct, cherishing such opinions, and dwelling upon such objects, as are fit to wear off that bias. Diligence in all this, is necessary for our avoiding every vice, but it is peculiarly necessary for our avoiding that ruling vice to which our constitution makes us to lean most strongly.

EVERY passion and affection is weak and pliable in the moment of its birth. Had we always recollection enough to observe, and resolution enough to check its first tendency to irregularity, our victory over it would be easy. But if we let slip this favourable moment, it will soon be able to carry us wherever it pleases. *When thou sittest to eat, says Solomon, put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite* *.

By the careful observation of this

* Prov. xxli. 1, 2.

rule, by opposing the first rising of the sensual appetite, the man who is most strongly turned to pleasure, would become capable of abstaining from every excess, and from every forbidden species of enjoyment. If we could mark the instant in which the desire of riches or of honours begins to render us uneasy in the want of them, and to suggest improper methods of pursuing them; the instant in which pride begins to swell the heart, malevolence to embitter the spirit, sociability to throw off the restraints of virtue, desire to grow up into rapacity or carefulness, and hope into presumption, *laughter* to become *mad**, sorrow to degenerate into dejection, or fear into despondence; the instant in which reserve verges towards fullness, in which modesty makes us think of omitting what our soul approves, in which we feel an inclination to resist evidence by which we are convinced, or to strive to believe what we cannot perceive to be proved, or to persist in a course which we see good reason to alter: if we could seize and improve that instant, we should effectually prevent our natural turn of temper from betraying us into sin. Even they who are far from governing it as they ought, may be convinced of this from their own experience: the most hasty spirits, for example, may perhaps recollect

* Eccles. ii. 2.

some rare occasions on which they have watched the beginnings of their anger, prevented its boiling in their hearts, and recovered their composure as soon it was disturbed; the same care constantly employed, would enable them to conquer it, and preserve them from all the outrages into which it has hurried them at other times. Constantly to observe and correct the first tendency of the predominant passion to evil, would be to kill the seeds of all its congenial vices, it would be to *pluck out the right eye*, and to *cut off the right hand* *.

WHEN this is neglected, when the ruling passion is allowed to become in any degree irregular, it works within the soul, it fixes the imagination on the attractions of its object, and from the contemplation of it draws nourishment and acquires strength. Then it struggles for exertion. To prevent its exertion will require more resolute and vigorous efforts than would have been sufficient to check it before it was so far indulged. But their difficulty is not greater than the necessity of employing them is urgent. If selfishness has already prompted thee to devise an unrighteous plan for gratifying it, and to wish for an opportunity of executing it; if *thine heart* has already de-

* Mat. v. 29, 30.

*clined to the ways of a strange woman**, and thou hast *lusted after her beauty in thine heart*†; if wrath has already raged like a tempest in a breast, and torn thee with the desire of hurting the person who had provoked it; if the gaiety of thy heart has already risen into levity ready to overleap the bounds of decency or to sport with sacred things; if thy prevailing passion, whatever it be, has already met with inward indulgence, recollect thyself immediately, thou hast no time to lose, thou art on the brink of the precipice, in one moment thou must either retreat, or tumble down. Even after the prevailing passion has been heedlessly suffered to operate so far, it may sometimes be checked and subdued by a bold and resolute effort seasonably exerted.

If we can even rein in our ruling passion before it has broken out into overt acts of vice, it will be of great importance for our obtaining the command of it. Every outward action strengthens the inward principle from which it proceeds; if we indulge ourselves in vicious actions dictated by our ruling passion, each of them will give it new vigour, and, aided by our natural proclivity to it, they will quickly render it habitually vicious, and almost irre-

* Prov. vii, 25.

† Chap. vi, 25.

sensible. Is thy heart prone to pride? High looks, lofty eyes, haughty words, stately carriage, insulting actions, will render thee continually more prone to it. Is thy natural propensity to anger? Hasty words, bitter taunts, outrageous violence will increase the propensity. But abstinence from all such evil actions as fall in with your natural temper, will be the beginning of your victory over it; deprived of the nourishment which it would have drawn from them, it will gradually be weakened; your abstinence will become continually easier; and by persisting in it, your temper will lose all its tendency to vice.

Our several passions and affections are excited by the presence or by the lively conception of their objects; they are enflamed by our entertaining flattering opinions of their objects. The frequent presence of these objects, the dwelling upon these opinions, cannot fail to strengthen our several passions, and, wherever the strength of a passion is faulty, to render it irregular and vicious. The greater our propensity to any passion, the more quickly will it become irregular. If therefore we would restrain our predominant passion, we must be at the greatest pains to avoid the objects, the opinions, the imaginations, which are favourable to its growth. Hast thou a propensity to ex-

cess?

cess? Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour to the cup, when it moveth itself aright *. Is thy constitutional bias to impurity and lust? Look not on a woman till thou hast lusted after her †. Dost thou feel in thyself any tendency to a narrow and contracted spirit? Let not thy heart suggest to thee that wealth is precious, let not thy fancy magnify the advantages of riches; wilt thou set thine eyes on that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven ‡. Wouldst thou restrain thy ruling passion? Learn first to govern thy senses and thine imagination.

IN order to restrain our ruling passion, it will often be necessary, studiously to turn our attention to such objects, and to accustom ourselves to such actions, as are most contradictory to it. Art thou constitutionally gloomy? Turn thy thoughts to the smiling scenes of nature, the cheering views of providence, and the gladdening prospects of religion. Art thou too much inclined to gaiety and giddiness? Force thyself to frequent contemplation of every thing that is awful in religion, and to the frequent performance of serious exercises. Art thou apt to become too fond of pleasure?

* Prov. xxiii. 31.

† Mat. v. 28.

‡ Prov. xxiii. 5.

Deny

Deny thyself even such gratifications as are lawful. Art thou naturally indolent? Prescribe to thyself vigorous and continued exertion in some laudable employment. When a twig has long been bent one way, it cannot be made straight, without being for some time bent the contrary way.

THE vices to which the natural temper gives us a propensity, are those which we shall find the greatest difficulty in conquering; and which, after many defeats, will most frequently revolt. The last vices which a good man is able to subdue, are his constitutional vices; he cannot mortify them perfectly in this mortal state; after all his pains, they now and then prevail against him; they are his frailties, from the incursions of which he can never be altogether secure. When Peter was a young Christian, he betrayed the timidity of his temper by denying his Lord: after he had made great proficiency in the Christian life, *he withdrew from the gentile converts, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision* *. He had often, in the interval, displayed a noble courage: but the contrary disposition had a foundation in his temper, and was ready to break out on particular occasions.

* Gal. ii. 12.

Good men fall into other sins, only before a violent temptation, or by being very much off their guard : but the best men, by the least failure in circumspection, or on a very weak temptation, sometimes fall into particular acts of those sins which suit their natural temper ; the temptation to them is ever present, it lurks within, it is in the heart itself. We should not for this reason give indulgence to such sins, or suffer ourselves to think favourably of them : whenever we fall into them, we should repent deeply : that we may not have occasion often to repent of them, we should direct our strictest attention to them, and employ our most strenuous endeavours against them, and thus, if human infirmity permits not our avoiding them wholly, render our commission of them less frequent every day. A propensity to them is the weak part of the fortress ; it needs a double guard. To preserve us from these vices, is one of the chief purposes for which the grace of God is given ; a victory over them, is one of the greatest triumphs of divine grace in the heart of man : grace to conquer them should be one of the greatest subjects of our prayers ; and we should improve the grace of God to this purpose, with the utmost diligence. The generality neglect to govern their natural temper, even so far as to restrain it from becoming vicious, or productive

S

of

of vicious actions: but the government of the temper, the ruling of a man's *own spirit*, implies much more than this.

2. It implies, that every man render his temper subservient to the practice of virtue and holiness. As every natural temper, even the most amiable, may degenerate into vice, so on the contrary, every temper, even that which becomes most disagreeable by the smallest corruption of it, may be made to contribute to the virtue of the heart. To make our natural temper to contribute to this, is an important part of our duty in governing it: it is the business of government, not only to restrain the subjects from crimes, but also to encourage them in right practice, and to direct and regulate their several occupations.

EVERY natural temper properly managed and improved, may give us an advantage, either for the practice of some particular virtue, or for the general security of our virtue. —Some turns of temper are naturally and strongly allied to virtue. It is scarcely necessary to observe, because it is so plain, that all the tempers which are founded in a predominance of the kind affections, are directly favourable to the love of mankind, to all the important virtues of benevolence and charity, and render the practice of every social duty easy and pleasant ;

fant; or that they introduce a habit of soul congruous to the love of God, as well as to that inward serenity which characterizes every grace, and renders it doubly amiable.

OTHER turns of temper are, as it were, neutral between virtue and vice: in perceiving how these may be rendered serviceable to virtue, there is little difficulty. The keen and eager temper, in which desire is the chief ingredient, when directed to holiness as its object, will render a man spirited in the practice of it, and susceptible of a strong impulse from its joys and rewards. The contrary temper, in which aversion prevails, tends to cherish a deep abhorrence of sin, which is one of the strongest and most permanent securities against the indulgence of it. Both these tempers may become equally conducive to holiness, by prompting us, the one to avoid evil, the other to do good. The temper of confidence which hope produces, will encourage the heart to aspire after the most excellent attainments, and to attempt the most arduous improvements in virtue. It seems to have been eminently the temper of the apostle Paul; in the school of Gamaliel, it led him to *profit in the Jews religion above many his equals in his own nation* *; in the Christian church, it made him

* Gal. i. 14.

to strive that he might not be *a whit behind the very chiefest apostles*, but in labours more abundant*; his discourse to the elders of Ephesus† bears many strong marks of it; in all his writings and in all his actions we may read his ambition to *reach forth unto those things which are before*‡. The opposite temper, likewise, of caution and timidity has so many peculiar advantages, is so friendly to circumspection and watchfulness, and consequently to that holiness which, without these, cannot be steadily and blamelessly practised in this state of trial and difficulty, that the wise man says, *Happy is the man that feareth alway*||. When a chearful heart is united to a virtuous character, it favours the improvement of it, it is its ornament, it gives a grace to all its exertions, it renders it amiable and attractive. Neither is the contrary temper without its own advantages; when it is duly regulated, it produces a seriousness in religion, which is venerable and commanding, and proves a preservative against many sins. A high tone of the passions, a sensibility, ardour, or activity of spirit, prepares the soul for entering into the raptures of devotion, for feeling the fervours of godly zeal, for shewing eminent alacrity in every duty. This temper led John

* 2 Cor. xi. 5, 23.

† Acts xx. 18---35.

‡ Phil. iii. 13.

|| Prov. xxviii. 14.

to sin, on one occasion, by wishing for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans *, and on another occasion, by intriguing for one of the chief places in the kingdom of Christ †: but it likewise cherished that holy vehemence in religion, which entitled him to be surnamed, *A son of thunder* ‡; and it gave his benevolence that constant warmth, that benign ardour which is conspicuous in all his writings. A temper opposite to this, may be improved into a settled composure and calm equability in the love and practice of holiness. A resolute spirit will render it the easier to be steadfast in our adherence to goodness. A pliable and variable temper is, to a certain degree, requisite for our being ready to correct what we have done amiss. But it is unnecessary to enter farther into particulars on this head.

IT is more needful to observe, because it is not so obvious, that even those turns of temper which are most nearly allied to vice, and which are with the greatest difficulty kept from running into it, may notwithstanding be rendered subservient to virtue. Pride, for instance, may be improved into true dignity of character, into a noble and habitual disdain of every thought and action that is mean or

* Luke ix. 54. † Mat. xx. 21. Mark x. 37. ‡ Mark iii. 17.

base. An ambitious temper needs only to be fixed upon its properest objects, in order to animate us in the indefatigable pursuit of that genuine honour which results from the approbation of God and from the glories of heaven, and which will be bestowed only on the righteous, and in proportion to their righteousness. A temper which, by being neglected, would become blameably selfish and contracted, will, by being governed, become eminently conducive to prudence, and an incitement to diligence in that course of holiness which is our real wisdom and our best interest. Even that temper in which the malevolent affections tend to preponderate, the sour, the morose, the irascible, may be rendered subservient to our virtue and improvement : if it be curbed so strongly as not to lead us to hurt others, or to wish for their hurt, it will exert itself in a keen indignation against vice, in a rigorous purity of heart, in a blameless severity of manners ; and it will make us inaccessible to many temptations which have great power over soft, and gentle, and social minds.

THUS every temper may be rendered productive of some advantages for the practice of virtue ; and it is our duty to consider what are the advantages which our particular temper gives us, and to improve them with care.

3. WE ought not only to render our peculiar temper subservient to virtue, but also to incorporate it with all our virtues.

WHETHER a man's character be good or bad, his natural temper will run through it, if it be not violently hindered, and will tinge it with a correspondent complexion. Both the particular vices to which different sinners addict themselves, and the particular manners in which they practise the same vices, are in a great measure determined by their different tempers. The grace of God does not extinguish the diversity of tempers; it only purifies and rectifies each of them. There is a great variety in the make of human bodies, even such as have nothing faulty or disproportioned; one is formed for strength, another for agility; the beauty of one consists in dignity, that of another in elegance: there are still greater varieties in men's inward characters, even when all of them are virtuous. In dispositions and manners no-wise blameable, there may be great dissimilitude. Characters equally good are yet never the very same. No virtue is wholly wanting in any good character: but one virtue or another predominates according to the original propensity of the soul, and directs and shapes the exertion of all the rest; and according to the same propensity, any one virtue is exercised and practised in a different manner and

stile by different men. Survey the good characters with which you are acquainted; you will find them distinguished in both these respects; no two of them are perfectly alike. All the good men whose lives the scripture has recorded, display different forms of holiness derived from their dissimilar tempers. Job is characterized by patience; Moses by meekness; David is high-spirited, his devotion is fervent, his virtues are all heroic; Solomon has a softer soul, turned for exercising virtue in the mild arts of peace; John and Paul are both warm, fervent, and affectionate, but the warmth of the former is sweet and gentle, that of the latter bold and enterprizing. To the influence of the natural temper informing and fashioning the whole character and conduct, are owing all the varieties of characters truly virtuous: without that influence they could differ only in the *degree* of their goodness; in all other respects they would be precisely similar.

As every man thus derives from nature a distinct personal character, he ought to adhere to it, and to preserve its peculiar decorum. He can preserve it only by maintaining his own natural temper so far as it is innocent, and acting always in conformity to it. We ought to comply with and follow our own

particular and proper nature in the cast of our whole behaviour; to violate it, will always be of bad consequence. Equability, consistence, and uniformity in the whole tenor of our lives is of very great importance; but it cannot be obtained, if we endeavour to put on the nature of another man, and to throw off our own. In whatever instances we attempt it, our behaviour cannot be natural or graceful; that will always become every man's most, which is most his own. Every departure from a man's own personal character is an affectation which will be either ridiculous or disgusting. It is like the painting of the face, it disguises the genuine complexion of the soul. It is like altering the natural cast of the body by running into distorted attitudes and motions. It is as if, in ancient games, the brawny wrestler had engaged only in the course, and the man who was fitted for the race had endeavoured to signalize himself by feats of strength. A man naturally sedate and grave, attempting gaiety and frolic, becomes an awkward buffoon; and a man naturally chearful, putting on gravity and severity, becomes no less awkwardly morose; each of them considered at one time, forms a perfect contrast to himself as he appears at another time. The man of a mild, gentle, timorous, flexible spirit, by choosing a walk

obeying the laws of nature and reason in
 his actions

in life which suits him, will be truly amiable; but should he set up for a bold reformer, or intrude into a bustling sphere; or rush forward into dangerous enterprises, he would quickly lose himself, and betray his weakness. In a word, as every violation of a man's peculiar temper is, in its own way, disagreeable, ungraceful, and pernicious, it is an important part of the government of the temper, to perform all our duties, and to cultivate and exercise all our virtues in congruity to it, and thus to maintain the decency of our personal and distinctive character.

To conclude this subject; if we would rule our *own spirit*, if we would govern our natural temper; let us restrain it from degenerating into vice, or leading us into sin: let us take every advantage which it can give us for the improvement of our hearts, and the practice of our duty: by preserving it and adhering to it so far as it is not vicious, let us render our whole character natural and uniform, and all our conduct graceful and consistent. The means of governing our peculiar temper are the same with the means of performing every other duty, resolution, congruous exercises, watchfulness, and prayer. But all these means we must in this case employ with peculiar care and diligence, because it is a matter of peculiar difficulty to controul and regulate our predominant

minant disposition. Its importance is, however, in proportion to its difficulty. If we can effectually accomplish this, it will render it the easier to subdue all our other irregular passions. They act in subordination to it, and derive a great part of their strength from it; and to subdue it, is like cutting off the general, who was the spirit of the battle, and on whose fall the army breaks and takes to flight. By cherishing our natural temper when refined from all perversity, we shall facilitate the practice of virtue, we shall render our virtues truly our own, consistent, becoming, and graceful; we shall obtain that inward tranquillity, satisfaction, and self-enjoyment which attends a natural state and behaviour; and when we are removed from this world, we shall find in our *Father's house mansions* * peculiarly adapted to our character, and shall be fit to fill our proper place in the heavenly society, to the beauty, perfection, harmony, and happiness of which a variety of characters, stations, and employments doubtless will contribute.

* John xiv. 2.

SERMON

innate disposition. Its importance is, however, in proportion to its difficulty. If we can effectually accomplish this, it will render it the easier to subdue all our other irregular passions. They act in subordination to it, and derive a great part of their strength from it; and to subdue it, is like cutting off the general, who was the spirit of the battle; and on whose fall the many breaks and takes to fight. By cherishing our natural temper when reined from all perversity, we shall facilitate the practice of virtue, we shall render our virtues truly our own, consistent, becoming, and graceful; we shall obtain that inward tranquillity, satisfaction, and self-enjoyment which attends a natural ease and behaviour; and when we are removed from this world, we shall find in our Father's house many mansions; peculiarly adapted to our character, and shall be able to fill our proper place in the heavenly society, to the beauty, perfection, harmony, and happiness of which a variety of characters, and employments doubtless will contribute.

S E R M O N XII.

VIRTUOUS SOLICITUDE.

PSALM cxix. 5.

O that my Ways were directed to keep thy Statutes!

A SOLICITUDE to perform our duty, an anxious concern to practise holiness at all times, and to make a constant progress in it, is an essential ingredient in a virtuous temper, a necessary qualification of our obedience, and a powerful means of our becoming active and steadfast in it. This solicitude is expressed strongly, though in very few words, in the text. The nature of the psalm gives great advantage for a lively and forcible expression of it. It is a pious meditation of David, in which he gives utterance to the several workings of his heart in a variety of situations, and particularly to his sentiments and emotions respecting the law of God. In comparison with the glowing pictures of character and manners,

to

to which such a meditation gives scope, general maxims delivered in a speculative discourse, are cold and unaffecting. It introduces us at once into the recesses of the psalmist's heart, it displays all the movements of his soul, it enables us to perceive and makes us to feel, how he thought and acted on every occasion. By this means it, as it were, embodies a virtuous temper, and while it gives us the clearest conception of the nature of holiness, at the same time strikingly inculcates the love and practice of it. Nothing could, for instance, convey to us a distincter or a livelier sense of earnest solicitude to practise and improve in holiness, than the warm wish which David expresses in my text: *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!* This short exclamation discovers his inmost temper; it shows a soul burning with love to goodness, bent on the practice of it, panting after improvement in it, and rising in fervent prayer to God for his assistance: and it expresses this temper with so great a force, that we can scarcely read his wish, without feeling our hearts disposed to join in it. I propose to illustrate this temper, by pointing out the several particulars which are implied in it.

I. THE psalmist's temper implies a lively sense of the supreme importance of holiness. A
sense

sense of this is the only proper foundation of solicitude to practise holiness; and it is plainly expressed in the context. In it the psalmist asserts the happiness of virtue; *blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the way of the Lord: blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart**. He reflects that it is required by that God who has supreme authority over us; *thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently*†. These views of holiness impressed him with such a sense of its importance, as naturally dictated this earnest wish, *that his ways were directed to keep God's statutes*. And when he had formed this wish, he hugged it in his very heart; he exulted in the prospect of the inward peace, self-complacence, and joy, which the accomplishment of it would give him; and by this prospect he cherished his wish and increased its ardour; *then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments: I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments*‡.

IN whatever light we consider holiness, we may well be sensible of its importance. When we consider it merely in relation to the sentiments of our own hearts, it is of such an

* Psal. ver. 1, 2.

† Ver. 4.

‡ Ver. 6, 7.

speaking consequence, that, if we be destitute of it, if we be conscious of our having lived in the violation of its laws, we cannot approve ourselves, but must be ashamed and despise ourselves, in every moment of serious reflection: Holiness is of indispensable obligation, for it is the law of the God who made us, the Sovereign of heaven and earth. It is the health of the soul, the balm of adversity, the ornament of prosperity, the greatest good of man, the happiness both of the present life and of the future. The wise man estimates matters justly when he declares that *to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man* *.

BUT many of us seem to form a very different judgment. If we ever think of the importance of keeping God's law, we think of it very seldom and very slightly: the thought sinks not so deep as to touch the heart; it certainly continues not so long nor recurs so often as to make a lasting impression on the heart. Far from regarding holiness as our chief, and, in comparison, our only concern, we seem to think it less our concern than any thing besides. A moment of guilty pleasure, a few pence, the gratification of any appetite or passion, seems to be, in our opinion, of greater

moment than doing the will of God ; for it is preferred to it every day. No wonder then that we are so indifferent, whether we do right or wrong, whether we improve or corrupt ourselves. Without a deep and permanent sense of the importance of virtue, as our dignity, our duty, and our interest, we cannot be solicitous to cultivate and practise it.

2. THE temper which the psalmist expresses in the text, implies a settled love of goodness and hatred of iniquity. This is the natural consequence of the former part of this temper. A just sense of the importance of holiness cannot fail to attach our hearts to it ; and it will not suffer us to be cold or lukewarm in our attachment. *Thy word, says our psalmist, is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it. I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love. My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly*.*

THE worst of men cannot help approving virtue and disapproving vice : but the approbation and disapprobation of the wicked are only cool perceptions of the understanding. In the good man, these perceptions are improved into warm sentiments of the heart, are made to

Ver. 140. 153. 163. 167.

T

grow

grow up into lively affections of love and hatred. A strong conception of the beauty of holiness, of the excellent nature and the happy consequences of virtue enamours his soul, and makes him to feel all that David felt when he said, *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way**. Hatred of sin is inseparable from the love of holiness; it is its counterpart, it is a different exertion of the very same affection. The more warmly we are affected by the excellence of virtue, the stronger sense we must have of the baseness of vice, the greater must be our abhorrence of it, the keener our indignation against it. A strong affection to any object always implies aversion to its contrary. If virtue be the darling of the heart, vice must be its detestation.

THESE principles rooted and cherished in the soul, will necessarily promote virtuous solicitude. Actuated by them, we cannot but

* Ver. 97, 103, 104, 127, 128.

regret deeply every failure in our duty, every stain and depravity of our temper; we must long for deliverance, from every remain of the body of sin; we must be intent upon holiness, and fired with a noble ardour in the practice of it.

3. THIS leads us on to observe, that the temper expressed in the text; includes a vigorous, constant, and prevailing desire to keep God's statutes. This is indeed the leading feature in that temper, it is the most obvious language of David's wish. It will naturally spring from a sense of the importance of holiness, and from love to it on account of its importance: and it is only when it springs from these that it can have either vigour or stability. When a wish that we were holy, springs up suddenly, as is too often the case, only from an occasional fit of seriousness, from accidental experience of some of the inconveniences of our vices, from the present depression of adversity, or from a momentary dread of the wrath of God, as from a seed dropt by chance in an improper or unprepared soil; no wonder that it is weak and puny, and quickly withers; for it has no sound and healthy root. It must grow out of a warm love to goodness, else it cannot thrive. That it may thrive, and yield its proper fruits, it must be both strong and constant.

RARE and transient wishes for holiness, however ardent, will be of small avail. There are few of us, perhaps, who do not sometimes wish, and wish earnestly too, that we were better than we are. It is only the sinner who is abandoned in his way, that never forms this wish. It now and then starts up in the thoughtless sons of pleasure, in the midst of their dissipation; though it stays not long enough to preserve them from going again into *the house of a strange woman* *, or from *seeking for mixt wine* †, on the next occasion. It sometimes steals into the heart of the busy worldling, though the cares of life banish it before it can excite him to *labour strenuously for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life* ‡. Sinners of every class cannot help sometimes wishing, their own souls know it, for deliverance from the power of sin. Nay, all who have not proceeded far and persisted long in sin, are at times wrung with anguish, and in the bitterness of their souls groan heavily for reformation. But all their wishes and their groans are useless, because they are not permanent and habitual.

ON the other hand, our desires of virtue and improvement will not be sufficient, though

* Prov. vii. 5. 8. † Chap. xxii. 30. ‡ John vi. 27.

they be constant, if they are not likewise strong. A man may feel pretty constantly a faint desire of doing good ; but because it is faint, it is therefore ineffectual. We sometimes feel such a desire, even while we are committing sin. At the very time when opportunity invites, when temptation solicits, when appetite or passion prompts to an act of sin, we yet do not run into it with full complacency ; there are desires and wishes on the other side ; they struggle against the commission of the sin : but they are vanquished by the superior strength of sinful inclination : yet they do not yield in silence ; they complain, as it were, of the violence which they suffer ; they make us to feel great reluctance against the sin, even while they yield. When the act of sin is over, the virtuous desires revive : we are pierced with grief ; we wish that we had not done it ; we wish and pray that we may be more resolute hereafter. But corrupt inclination soon begins again to rise ; it struggles against the nobler wish for virtue : these opposite desires possess the heart by turns ; they sometimes even occupy it together, and distract it. But on a new trial, the vicious desire puts forth all its strength : the virtuous wish is overwhelmed ; in every trial it fails, for it has not vigour enough to actuate us uniformly, in opposition to vicious principles.

DAVID's concern to practise and improve in holiness, was at once vigorous, and steady. He explicitly declares both its vehemence and its constancy; *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments* *. Our desires of virtue should have so great life as to be able constantly to support themselves against all opposition, and to exert themselves in spight of every difficulty. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness* †: the appetites of hunger and thirst will be satisfied with nothing but meat and drink, and they crave always till they get them; just so, our desire to keep God's law, ought to be such as will be satisfied with nothing less than actually keeping it, and such as will make our endeavours restless and indefatigable till we be conscious that we have kept it.

4. THE temper of solicitude to keep God's statutes, which David expresses in the text, implies a firm resolution to keep them. That he was resolved, he tells us explicitly when he says almost immediately after, *I will keep thy statutes* ‡. *I have chosen the way of truth.* I

* Ver. 40, 20. 131.

† Mat. v. 6.

‡ Ver. 8.

will keep thy precepts with my whole heart *. Throughout the psalm, he repeatedly declares his resolution, in a great variety of terms. The desire of being virtuous, naturally produces a resolution to practise virtue; and by this resolution the desire is, in its turn, confirmed.

WE do not sincerely desire a thing, at most our desire of it is very weak, if we at the same time resolve not to do any thing for obtaining it. A strong desire of what in any measure depends upon our own endeavours, quickly converts itself into a resolution to pursue it: the desire is the resolution in its beginning; the resolution is the desire risen to maturity. When even transient wishes that they were better men, are accidentally excited in the wicked, they always produce, at least for a moment, some design of becoming better men. The design proves abortive, because the wishes were only transient. But were we earnestly and habitually desirous of becoming holy, we would be likewise sincerely and constantly determined to practise holiness. Without a resolution to do all we can to keep God's statutes, an ardent desire to keep them would be an absolute absurdity.

* Ver. 30. 69.

As soon as the resolution is formed, it supports and strengthens the desire. It presents the object of the desire in a new form fit to draw out that desire with redoubled force; it sets it before us as what we have resolved that we will by any means obtain. *I have said that I would keep thy words. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments* *. The psalmist's prayer in the text, expresses a soul already resolved to practise virtue, and in consequence of this concerned and solicitous to execute the resolution. His resolution was hearty and permanent; and therefore his solicitude was vehement and lasting. But too often our resolutions are neither vigorous nor habitual; and our solicitude must partake in their infirmity and languor. When a favourable opportunity of committing some darling sin occurs, when a strong temptation to it presents itself, we discover that we have never made a determined choice of the ways of virtue, that we have been but half-resolved to walk in them, that resolution has never taken fast hold of us. For if our resolution be at all remembered in the hour of difficulty, we find it feeble and impotent; it suffers itself to be explained away; we persuade ourselves that it was not necessary to have formed

* Ver. 57, 106.

it with so great rigour and severity, and that in this instance we may venture to counteract it. Enervated by these suggestions of corrupt passion, our good resolutions yield; they vanish; and with them vanishes every desire to do our duty. This desire is again awakened; our resolutions are renewed; and renewed still again: but still again they fail, and are forgotten in the day of trial. Such fluctuation makes it plain that our resolution was not firm. It sprang not from a stable love of goodness, nor from a predominant desire to practise it: and for that reason it begets no solicitude to carry it into execution. A hearty resolution would be an unalterable choice of God's *testimonies* as our employment and our *heritage for ever* *.

5. THE psalmist's temper which we are describing, implies a prevailing bias of the whole soul towards virtuous practice. He declares explicitly that this was included in his temper; *I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end* †. It is not enough that the *will* be fixt in a determination to practise holiness; the whole *heart* likewise, all the affections and springs of action, must acquire a continual bent and tendency

* Ver. 111.

† Ver. 112.

towards

towards the practice of it. Till they have acquired this bent, our desire of practising holiness cannot settle into an uninterrupted solicitude, but must often fail of producing its effect. The inclination of the heart to virtue arises partly from the reduction of vicious passions, and partly from the vigour of good affections.

WHILE vicious passions retain so great a strength as to render us often violently prone to sin, they will often likewise make us to look upon our duty with aversion or regret; they will extinguish for a time the *desire* of performing it, even though we be determined to perform it; and in the place of that desire, they will inspire wishes that we could in this instance dispense with obedience to the law of God. Few of us, I fear, have made so great a progress in virtue, as not sometimes to feel corrupt inclination struggling in this manner against our best principles and resolutions. We are, perhaps, determined not to indulge it: but it is so strong that it almost overcomes us; it is by a sort of force that principle and resolution restrain us, unwilling and reluctant, from proceeding to the full indulgence of it. It is well if they restrain us by any means. God knows that in many cases they cannot. But their needing to restrain us by force, by
so

so violent an exertion of their power, is a proof of the imperfection of our holiness. Our heart is not yet enough formed to virtue, else sinful passion could not resist so stoutly. Indeed, in this frail and feeble state, irregular appetites and passions cannot be totally extirpated; solicited by the presence or the conception of their object, they will sometimes rise and labour for indulgence. But in the person who is resolved and solicitous to adhere to virtue, and habitually actuated by this resolution and solicitude, irregular inclinations will be so often checked, and so much accustomed to submit, that whenever the virtuous principle begins to exert itself, they will, after a few languid efforts, yield without great reluctance; in like manner as the most mettlesome horse, by being enured to the bit, readily obeys the gentlest motion of the skilful rider.

AT the same time, all virtuous affections, being nourished by the determined choice and love of the heart, and strengthened by habitual practice consequent thereupon, will be rendered sensible, as it were, of their title to indulgence, will rise with confidence, will be in a constant preparation and forwardness to exert themselves, and will exert themselves with alertness and vigour whenever they have opportunity.

portunity. Thus ardent desire of virtue, cherished by love to it, and supported by a steady resolution to practise it, will gradually produce a propensity to virtue, wear off the contrary bias of depraved nature, and impress a predominant bent and tendency to run into the practice of every duty: and by this bent and tendency, the desire of virtue and improvement will be strengthened and secured of its accomplishment; for it will be rendered natural and congruous to the reigning temper of the soul.

6. FINALLY, the temper which the psalmist here expresses, implies fervent desire of God's assistance in the practice of holiness. He addresses his wish in a prayer to God; and in many passages of the psalm, with declarations of his solicitude to do his duty, he joins petitions for aid from God in doing it. *I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness. Let*

*thy hand help me, for I have chosen thy precepts.**

THE weakness and the corruption of our nature render the assistance of God absolutely necessary for our practising holiness. A sense of necessity is sufficient to produce ardent desires of that assistance, and earnest wishes for it, in every person who regards and is attached to holiness as his main concern. Had we indeed no hope of obtaining it, our wishes must be weak and transient: desire vanishes when we know it to be impossible that it should be fulfilled; it soon becomes languid when its accomplishment appears to be totally uncertain. But desire is supported and invigorated by the prospect of its being satisfied. Of assistance from the benignity of God, in practising that holiness which is his delight, nature itself infuses some degree of hope, and revelation gives us full assurances. If then we be not constantly concerned to obtain it, we cannot be sensible of the infinite importance of holiness, we can have no love to it, we can have neither desire nor resolution to adhere to it, we cannot have the smallest inclination of heart to the practice of it. This temper would impel us with an irresistible force to ask the aids of divine grace; it would not suffer us at any time to ask them

* Ver. 8. 33. 35. 36. 40. 159. 173.

without a real desire of them in our hearts; it would not suffer us to ask them with only weak desires. It would not suffer us to continue long without exerting desires of them; it would render our concern to be assisted and strengthened by God, constant and habitual. We stand in need of his assistance for doing every action of our lives in a right manner; let us not at the time of any action be void of the desire of his assistance. In particular, whenever we find either a temptation or an inclination to any sin, whenever we meet with any difficulty in perceiving or adhering to our duty, let us then recollect ourselves, and cherish and put forth desire of aid from heaven. Let us diligently use all means of religious worship and meditation, which God hath appointed for the communication of his grace to men: and whenever we use them, let it not be with indifference, let it be with fervent desires of obtaining by them the influences of divine grace. The grace of God alone can keep alive our solicitude to do his will, and preserve it in continual vigour; and, as the tree naturally draws in the sap which conduceth to its life and growth, that solicitude will foster earnest and habitual desires of his grace to enable us to do his will.

THUS,

without

THUS, the psalmist's prayer in the text is a fervent expression of his solicitude to practise and improve in holiness. It displays a soul possessed with a deep sense of the supreme importance of holiness, with a prevailing love to it, with strong and constant desires of it; resolved firmly to adhere to it, habitually prone and well-disposed to its several duties, and earnest to obtain all that assistance from God, which is necessary for *holding up our goings in his ways* *. These are the sentiments and dispositions which, by their union, form that concern and solicitude to become holy, which ought to actuate us uniformly, which is an essential ingredient in a virtuous temper, and which will be one of the most powerful incitements to the cultivation of it. In every person who is not wholly destitute of holiness, some degree of this solicitude must take place. No man can practise holiness, whose heart is not set upon it as his business. The best of us are defective in virtuous solicitude; and therefore our holiness is so incomplete. A just and permanent concern to be better, would quickly carry us forward to the perfection of goodness.

THAT you may understand this holy solicitude still more clearly, that you may judge

* Psal. xvii. 5,

the more certainly whether you are actuated by it, that you may have the stronger sense of its moment and utility, I shall conclude this discourse with pointing out, what sort of conduct and behaviour will naturally result from the inward temper which we have described. Is it not plain, that the man whose soul is full of love to virtue, and resolved, anxious, and inclined to practise it and excel in it, as long as he acts under the influence of this temper, will be indefatigable in studying his duty, and careful, diligent, inflexible in doing what he knows to be his duty? Does not ardour in every art, prompt the artist to become perfect both in the knowledge of its principles, and in performing according to its rules? And can it be otherwise in the art of life?

In every situation, that man's concern, who glows with virtuous ardour, will be, not what is agreeable to his humour and inclination, and what will procure him pleasure or advantage, but solely what is right and good. Intent on discovering this, he will, like David, *meditate on God's precepts*, and *hide God's word in his heart*, that he may not *sin against him*; his *testimonies also* will be his *delight*, and his *only counsellors**. Except we know our

* Ver. 15. 21. 24.

duty,

duty, it is impossible that we practise it. If we willingly remain ignorant of it, we are indifferent about it.

WHEN desire, love, resolution, and inclination are all fixt upon holiness, the united force of these cannot fail to render a man diligent in practising it. He will abstain from every sin; for that holiness on which his heart is set, includes universal purity. We commit sin, only because we are not enough solicitous to avoid it. They who seek opportunities of sinning, who designedly meet temptations, or who yield without a struggle on their first assault, show that they are wholly destitute of virtuous solicitude, nay under the power of a contrary temper, prone to sin, in love with it, confirmed in iniquity. Temptations will often force themselves upon us: if in this case we yield to them easily, or deliberate about yielding to them, or admit in our hearts any extenuations of the sin, or falter in our resistance to it, this manifestly proceeds from some coldness in our love of virtue, some weakness in our resolution to pursue it, some faintness in our desire of practising it, some remaining indisposition of our hearts to virtue. The man who is intent on virtue, will be watchful against every deviation from it. The infirmity of his nature will not allow him to avoid every

act of sin: but his inward temper will make him restless till he recover himself by repentance, and fortify his soul more strongly against a relapse. A sudden temptation may now and then surprise him off his guard: but for the most part, the aversion of his determined heart against sin, will be roused quickly enough to defend him even from a sudden assault. Corrupt appetite and passion, like a reduced enemy deriving unnatural strength from a fit of despair, may at times exert such force as to gain an advantage over him: but they will never be able to bring him into lasting subjection; fixt on the attainment of holiness, he will war constantly against all its enemies, till he subdue them, though it should be by slow degrees, and by means of the severest struggles. He will practise and cultivate every virtue: for every virtue belongs to that holy temper which engages his most earnest solicitude. Omissions of his duty, neglects of the virtuous exertions for which he has opportunity, will be the rare blemishes of his conduct, not its general tenor or complexion. The temper of his soul will produce activity in well doing, will render him resolute, patient, and undaunted in surmounting all the difficulties of religion, will prompt him to put forth all his strength, that he may be ever pure, blameless, and eminently good. In propor-

tion as our solicitude for virtue renders it our prevailing temper, every duty will become pleasant to us, by falling in with the predominant bent of our hearts; and we shall perform it with alacrity and chearfulness: its very difficulties will only occasion an agreeable exertion of vigour: even the pains which it brings upon us, will be amply compensated by the gratification which the performance of it yields to our prevailing temper: and we shall constantly *delight ourselves in God's commandments, which we have loved* *.

O that our ways were directed thus to keep God's statutes! Amen.

Ver. 47.

For as our solicitude for virtue renders it our prevailing temper, every duty will become pleasant to us, by uniting it with the predominant heat of our heart; and we shall be born it with alacrity and cheerfulness: its joys and pleasures will only occasion an agreeable sensation of a good, even the pains which it brings upon us, will be amply compensated by the gratification which the performance of it yields to our prevailing temper: and we shall constantly, without ourselves, in God's commandments, receive we have found.

O that our hearts were directed to the Lord, that we might be able to do his will, and that we might be able to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

God's will is our law, and our duty is to do his will, and to love him with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

S E R M O N XIII.

REGARD TO POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS, ESSENTIAL TO GOODNESS OF CHA- RACTER.

LUKE i. 6.

*And they were both righteous before God, walk-
ing in all the commandments and ordinances
of the Lord, blameless.*

IN these words, which contain the character given by the evangelist, of the parents of John the Baptist, the moral precepts of the law are by many thoughts to be meant by *ordinances*, and the positive and ritual precepts, by *commandments*: and in respect of both, Zacharias and Elizabeth are pronounced *righteous before God*, and *blameless* in the sight of men. In this light, the words intimate, That a regard to ritual duties really instituted by God, as well as to moral virtue, is necessary to a worthy and blameless character. But though the expressions should not be considered as in-

tended to mark this distinction, it being certain that they are often used promiscuously in scripture, yet the text will naturally enough suggest the same intimation; for none who attends to the nature of the Mosaical dispensation, abounding with ceremonies appointed by the immediate authority of God, can imagine that a Jew and a Jewish priest would have been respected as bearing a blameless character, without the punctual observance of all the ritual duties of his religion.

THAT moral duties are *the weightier matters of the law* *, and of higher and more indispensable obligation than any positive and external duty, none but the superstitious will deny. It is so plain and so certain a truth, that even the superstitious generally rather act in contradiction to it, than explicitly deny it. But on this obvious and important truth, error may be grafted. By this principle, some who profess to believe the gospel, think themselves authorised to pronounce, that a regard to external worship and ritual duties, is not at all essential to a good and worthy character; and to bestow the highest applause on persons whose benevolence and moral integrity they reckon unexceptionable, without any abatement for their totally neglecting all the positive appoint-

* Mat. xxiii. 23.

SERM. XIII, *essential to Goodness of Character.* 311

ments of Christianity. Nay a punctual observance of these, they would perhaps consider as taking something from the character, as implying weakness and superstition, if not hypocrisy. This judgment is pronounced by such persons as think themselves at liberty to neglect positive duties, provided they adhere to moral virtue. The principles of conduct which we adopt for ourselves, always influence our sentiments of others.

IN consequence of the influence of opposite principles of conduct, the generality of Christians form a very different judgment. I speak not of the superstitious, who despise morality, and foolishly rest in outward rites as the whole of religion; it is natural for them to reckon a scrupulous observance of rites, a compensation for moral goodness in other men, as well as in themselves. But even they whom all except the impious will acquit from the charge of superstition; they who, both in principle and in practice, acknowledge the great superiority of moral to positive duties, but yet esteem these latter also of high obligation; nay all who have a genuine and deep sense of religion, not only judge a regard to its positive institutions absolutely necessary to complete a worthy character; but even pass a severer censure on a total disregard to these, or a very

U 4 great

great neglect of them, than on some transgressions of moral obligation, and reckon it a more certain sign of an unprincipled and graceless character.

THIS judgment seems, at first sight, to be inconsistent with the acknowledged preference due to moral duties: the unbelieving and ungodly ascribe it, without hesitation, to superstition: and as it is adopted by serious Christians in general, and even supported by the declarations of scripture and the spirit of revealed religion, they confidently urge it as a proof, That revealed religion and positive precepts necessarily foster superstition, and lead men to undervalue morality. It will be useful, therefore, to account for this judgment without resolving it into superstition; to shew that it is just and well founded, and perfectly consistent with the superiority of moral virtue, to all positive duties; to evince that notwithstanding this superiority, a *great* neglect of the latter, is really baser and more blameable than *some* defects in the former. It will tend to invalidate a plausible objection against the genius, and consequently the divinity of Christianity, and to correct sentiments which many Christians have, especially in this age, heedlessly borrowed from infidelity. With a view to these important purposes, I shall, in the present discourse, endeavour to prove, That a total disregard to the

positive

SERM. XIII. *essential to Goodness of Character.* 313

positive and external duties of religion, or a very great neglect of them, is justly reckoned more blameable, and a stronger evidence of an unprincipled character, than even some transgressions of moral obligation: and afterwards I shall apply the subject to the direction of our practice.

I BEGIN with observing that, positive institutions in general, as distinguished from particular rites, have really the nature of moral commandments. No one particular mode of external worship is of moral obligation; but to worship God externally is a duty of moral obligation, suitable to our compound frame and our embodied state, and so obviously discernible by the light of nature, that it has been acknowledged by the universal practice of mankind in every age and every nation. But the man who totally and constantly neglects positive duties, does not at all worship God externally; and consequently transgresses a moral obligation, and is justly censurable as, in that respect, immoral and vicious.

BESIDES, even particular positive precepts, as soon as they are given by God, have something moral in their nature. Suppose the rites which are enjoined by them, perfectly indifferent before they were enjoined; yet from that

314 *Regard to positive Institutions*, SERM. XIII.

that moment they cease to be indifferent. The divine authority is interposed for the observance of them. To neglect them, is no longer to forbear an indifferent action, or to do a thing in one way rather than in another, which has naturally no greater propriety: it is very different; it is to disobey God, it is to despise his authority, it is to resist his will. Can any man believe a God, and not acknowledge that disobedience to him and contempt of his authority is immoral, and far from the least heinous species of immorality? To condemn the person, therefore, who neglects the external worship of God and the positive institutions of his will, and to condemn him for this neglect more severely than for some other vices, is not weakness, is not superstition, is not to give rites the preference to moral virtue; it is only to proportion our sentiments to the comparative moment of different moral virtues; it is only to pronounce that obedience to the great Lawgiver of the universe is a very sacred and important virtue; it is only to judge consistently with the belief of a God.

To render this still plainer, it may be observed, that positive duties are *expressions* of affections and dispositions morally good. The heart is the seat both of virtue and of vice; but every virtue and every vice seated in the heart,

heart, necessarily exerts itself in correspondent outward actions. We perceive only these actions; from them we infer the virtue or vice of the heart; and we bestow upon the character a degree of approbation or of disapprobation suited to the virtue or the vice which we have found reason to infer. Our exact observance of positive rites owned by us to be of divine appointment, shews in general a temper of subjection and obedience to God; the neglect of such rites shews the want or the weakness of this temper. Every particular religious rite is fit also for expressing some particular good affection; thanksgiving is an exertion of gratitude; prayer of dependence, intercession of benevolence: and if the good affection be vigorous in the heart, it will break forth into such exertion. The neglect therefore of all external worship and positive duties, indicates the want, and great remissness in them proclaims the weakness, of all the good affections which would have been exercised in performing them; and the man who indulges himself in that remissness or neglect, we with reason consider as void of these affections. They are among the most amiable affections in human nature; they stand in opposition to the most detestable vices: on the person, therefore, who, either by his neglect of the positive institutions and external duties of religion, or by any other

other means, shews himself to be destitute of these affections, not to pass a heavy censure, would demonstrate a great perversion of judgment. For to be destitute of these affections, is a deeper depravity than that which is fixed upon the character by some immediate transgressions of moral laws. When we censure it more severely than such transgressions, we only look beyond the outward action which indicates it, and which is neither good nor evil, considered merely in itself; we abstract from such circumstances of the action as are not essential, we consider it simply as a *sign* of inward moral temper; and we estimate the character according to that inward temper, which alone can be of importance in determining it.

FARTHER, all positive institutions of divine appointment, are *means* of cultivating moral virtue. Be the rites themselves what they will, their being enjoined by God, renders them proper trials of our obedience to him, and renders our observance of them the means of cherishing a sense of his authority, and of improving a principle of subjection to it. A principle of subjection to the authority of God, is one of the firmest supports of all goodness and virtue: and positive institutions are the most direct means of cultivating it; for the observance of them proceeds solely from
the

the principle of obedience ; but in every moral virtue, other principles are conjoined with this. All the rites appointed by God, are likewise direct and very powerful means of improving many particular virtuous affections, all the affections which are naturally exercised in performing them. Neglect of the means demonstrates, in every case, indifference about the end. Disregard to external worship and positive institutions, shews the want of all concern for moral improvement. But unconcernedness for moral improvement is not the defect of a single virtue, is not a single vice ; it is a corruption and degeneracy of the whole soul, and therefore must appear highly detestable to every person of sound and unbiassed judgment, much more highly detestable than some transgressions of a single moral law.

AGAIN, when men indulge themselves in the neglect of positive duties, their acts of neglect are more frequent, more constant, and bear a greater proportion to their acts of performance, than the acts of immediate immorality which, even in very vicious persons, fall under the notice of observers. But it is unquestionably just to pass a severer censure on a long and uninterrupted multitude of transgressions, though each of them, taken by itself, be not very heinous, than on a few acts
of

318 *Regard to positive Institutions*, SERM. XIII.

of vice, each of which singly is greater than any one of the others. This consideration actually has great influence on the judgment now under examination: for on the one hand, it is only the total or the very great neglect of positive institutions, that men pronounce inconsistent with all principle and goodness; smaller degrees of neglect we treat with greater indulgence, than almost any immediate transgression of moral law: and on the other hand, when a man lives in the frequent or the continual practice of any direct immorality, we consider him as abandoned to that vice, and never fail to blame his conduct more highly than we blame any neglect of positive institutions.

It must be added, that the neglect of positive duties is more obvious to spectators, than many transgressions of moral obligation. These latter are sometimes indefinite and ambiguous; the actions from which we infer a transgression, are in some degree equivocal, and capable of different constructions: but the neglect of a positive institution, is an act absolutely determinate, which can neither be palliated nor explained away. Men therefore pass their censure upon it without hesitation: and the assurance and readiness with which they pass it, gives their judgment greater firmness and force,

and

SERM. XIII. *essential to Goodness of Character.* 319

and more appearance of severity, than the judgments have, which they pronounce with hesitation, concerning transgressions of moral obligation, more indeterminate or equivocal.

FINALLY, with respect to almost every transgression of moral obligation, there is some natural passion, which directly and universally proves a temptation to it. We of course think of this temptation along with the transgression; and a sense of its strength, and of the difficulty of resisting it, mitigates our censure. Any vicious passion may, accidentally and in a particular instance, oppose the observance of a positive institution: but there is no one natural passion which stands directly and in all cases in opposition to the performance of positive duties. Consequently there is no universal temptation to the total or habitual neglect of them, in the view of mankind, when they pass their censure on the person who indulges himself in that neglect: and therefore they pass it without mitigation or abatement.

THESE considerations duly weighed will be sufficient to vindicate the severe judgment passed by the bulk of Christians, concerning the character of those persons who habitually or totally disregard the positive institutions of religion. This judgment is perfectly consistent with

with a sense of the superior excellence of moral virtue: it by no means implies that mere rites and ceremonies are in any case so essential as moral goodness: it only considers a disregard to rites ordained by God, as a proof of moral defect or depravity, and condemns it more severely than smaller defects or depravities evidenced by actions of a different kind. This judgment proceeds not from superstition; it is founded in nature, it is confirmed by the clearest principles of sound reason. It is not they who reckon a regard to positive institutions essential to a good and unblemished character, that judge weakly, but they who reckon that regard of no importance. Vain are their pretensions to enlargement of sentiment and elevation above prejudice: their minds are so contracted that they can admit only a partial idea of the nature of positive duties; they consider but the mere matter of them; they comprehend not their moral principles, their sublime end, or their important signification. Suffer not yourselves, Christians, to adopt or to give any countenance to a judgment which cannot be supported without supposing, either that the ritual institutions of your religion are not of divine original, or that the precepts of your God are not of sacred obligation. Your religion does bind you to hold the contrary judgment; and in doing so, it perfectly coincides

cides with reason: it fosters not superstition; it prohibits irreligion: it sets not morality aside; but it completes it, and makes a provision for its support, absolutely necessary in our present embodied state. The high regard which Christianity demands to external worship, can be no presumption that it is an imposture: on the contrary, its entire coincidence with reason in demanding this regard, consistently with the acknowledged superiority of moral virtue, and even in subservience to it, is a mark of its descent from that God who endued men with reason.

THE observations which we have made in this discourse, tend no less to direct our practice, than to regulate our judgment, with respect to the moral and the positive precepts of religion. They serve to restrain us from both the extremes to which mankind have always shewn a propensity.

THEY warn us, on the one hand, against indulging ourselves in the neglect of the positive appointments of Christianity, under a pretence of adhering solely to morality. They demonstrate this neglect, so incompatible with the whole tenor of the gospel, to be, on supposition of the truth of the gospel, no less incompatible with reason, and a heinous viola-

tion of morality itself. Moral duties are far more excellent than positive: whenever, in a particular situation, we cannot perform both, unquestionably we ought to prefer the former; but whenever there is no such inconsistency, it is equally unquestionable that the obligation of the latter is sacred and indispensable. Such inconsistency is very rare: how seldom does our situation enable us honestly to say, that we could not have attended upon external worship without neglecting some moral duty? How seldom is the superiority of virtue to external rites at all applicable to our situation, or capable of being pleaded as an excuse for our omitting these? The omission generally proceeds from very dissimilar causes; from insensibility to the authority of God's laws, from weakness of the religious affections, from indifference about spiritual improvement, indifference about improvement in that very morality, for which we pretend so ardent a zeal. No doubt there may be just reasons for omitting a positive duty at a particular time. But what then? Will this excuse our omitting it when there is no just reason? There may be reasons also for omitting a particular exercise of moral virtue: peculiar circumstances may make that cease to be our duty at one time, which is our duty at other times. Will it therefore follow that moral virtue may be neglected

SERM. XIII. *essential to Goodness of Character.* 323

lected when no such peculiar circumstances exist? In the former case it is, as really as in the latter, a point of conscience whether the reasons which actually move us to the omission, are just and valid. For the frequent omission of positive duties, much more for the habitual and constant neglect of them, there cannot possibly be any just or valid reason: it is absolutely inexcusable; it is inconsistent with the belief of the gospel.

BUT let us be likewise careful to guard against the opposite extreme. While we shun irreligion, let us with equal caution avoid superstition. Though a regard to positive duties be necessary for completing a worthy character, yet a regard to them alone will contribute very little to worthiness of character. To perform them without a religious temper, is base hypocrisy; to perform them without moral improvement, is unprofitable superstition; to reckon the performance of them a compensation for the neglect of any virtue, an atonement for any vice, is destructive impiety. All the principles from which we have been reasoning, imply the superiority of moral virtue; it is from the indispensable obligation and the excellence of this, that we have deduced all our proofs of the sacred obligation of positive institutions. As they who *disregard*

these, neglect the necessary means and the natural expressions of religion, so they who *rest* in them, despise its principle and its substance. While we are not negligent in observing any institution of our religion, let us be diligent in practising every virtue.

RELIGION is of a complex nature. It includes things of different kinds; it includes articles of faith, and rules of practice; it includes precepts of a moral, and precepts of a positive kind: all these are essential to it, and each of them has its proper place and dignity. We ought not to separate them; we ought not unduly to exalt one, and depress the rest. The Pharisees, in our Saviour's time, undervalued and neglected moral duties, and hoped to expiate the neglect by a very scrupulous compliance not only with positive precepts of divine appointment, but also with superfluities of their own invention. For this our Saviour often reproved them with great severity. The contrary extreme he had scarcely an opportunity of reproving professedly; none of the Jews imagined it lawful to neglect the ritual of their religion; it is among Christians that this inconsistent absurdity has been introduced by the contagion of infidelity. Yet in reproving the Pharisees, he has sufficiently put us on our guard against this extreme.

treme. While he declares the superior excellence of moral virtue, and inculcates the careful practice of it, as indispensable, he is far from vilifying positive duties of God's appointment, he inculcates the observance of them also, as truly necessary. He distinguishes the respective obligations of these two classes with the utmost accuracy: *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and rue, and all manner of herbs, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the love of God: THESE ought you to have DONE, and not to leave the other undone* *. Neither part of the injunction is unnecessary in the Christian world; neither part of it can be disregarded without hazard to our souls. If we walk not both in all the *commandments*, and in all the *ordinances* of the Lord, if we perform not both *moral* and *positive* duties in their proper places, we cannot sustain a character of complete and consistent worth, we can neither be *righteous before God*, nor *blameless* in the eyes of such men as judge soundly and impartially.

* Mat, xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 42.

terms. While he declares the superior excellence of moral virtue, and inculcates the cardinal practice of it, as indispensable, he is far from visiting positive duties of God's appointment, he inculcates the observance of them also, as truly necessary. The distinctions of the respective obligations of these two classes with the utmost accuracy: He who was, Justice and Piety, Pity and Mercy; for as far as the mind and will, and emotion, and love, and the manner of being, and how united the neighborly duties of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the love of God; these ought not to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Neither part of the injunction is unnecessary in the Christian world; neither part of it can be disregarded without hazard to our souls. If we walk not both in all the commandments, and in all the commandments of the Lord, if we perform not both moral and positive duties in their proper places, we cannot sustain a character of complete and consistent worth; we can not then be righteous before God, nor a unity in the eyes of such men as judge soundly and impartially.

SECT. II. OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE LAW.

S E R M O N XIV.

REDEEMING THE TIME.

PREACHED IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR.

EPH. v. 16.

Redeeming the time.—

IT is the prerogative of man's reasonable nature, to be capable of looking backward to the past, and forward to the future. It is this capacity that qualifies us for forming some judgment of the future, and for directing our conduct in it, by the experience which we have acquired in time past. Our acting this part is absolutely necessary for the prudent management of our worldly business. It is equally necessary in religion; and, as subservient to religious prudence, it is incomparably more important, because religion is our principal concern.

To reflect on the past part of our lives, extending our thoughts at the same time to the

future part of them; and from that reflection, to collect maxims for the regulation of our future conduct, is a very powerful means of religious improvement. It is to *redeem the time*, that we may *walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise*. It is an exercise which we ought to perform frequently, but which we are very apt to neglect. For preventing the neglect, we should take advantage of the several distinctions of time, and at the end of each of them recollect our demeanour through the course of it, for our direction in the next. It is an excellent advice to this purpose, which an ancient philosopher gave to his scholars; At the end of every day, to recollect all the actions of it, that if they had done any thing amiss, they might amend it next day, and that if they had done any thing well, they might enjoy the comfort of it. When a heathen recommended this to be practised every day, may not they blush to call themselves Christians, who practise it scarcely any day? Such daily recollection, uniformly persisted in, could not fail to produce the happiest effects. A little time only could indeed, by the generality, be bestowed upon it every day: but, if it were practised every day, a very little time would soon become sufficient for it. Even in this case however, it would not be superfluous, at the end of larger periods of our time, particularly

of

of the years which divide our lives, to survey at greater leisure the manner in which we have employed them ; to consider more deliberately how we may render the occurrences of them subservient to our improvement ; and to resolve more explicitly that we will render them subservient to it. But the more negligent we have been in daily recollection, the more necessary it is that we should deliberately reflect upon our conduct at stated times.

ONE year is just expired ; only a few days of another year are yet elapsed. If we have begun this year with the practice now mentioned, it is well. If we have not, it is not yet too late : we are yet alive, though even in these few days many of our fellow-men, and some it may be of our neighbours, have been snatched away by death. Let us seize the opportunity while we have it : how soon it may be lost, God only knows. While we yet live, let us look back upon our past conduct, that we may learn to *redeem the time*. Thus the apostle exhorted the Ephesians ; and thus he exhorteth every one of us. The Ephesians had but lately heard the gospel preached, having, for the greatest part of their lives, been heathens, *dead in trespasses and sins, wherein they walked, according to the course of*
this

this world *: the apostle considers all that part of their lives as lost, and directs them to *redeem* it, to buy it back. Though we were born Christians, we also have lost a great part of our past time, *having a name that we lived, we have been dead* †: let us too buy back our time,

THERE is a sense, in which every man would gladly buy back his past time. When old age has come upon us, when feebleness has run through our frame, when disease racks us, who would not willingly recover the season of youth, health, and vigour? The sensualist, when pleasure begins to lose its relish, or when he can no longer find opportunity and means of gratification, wishes that he could recall the opportunities and the enjoyments which he once had, and taste his sensuality anew. The worldling would rejoice, if he could recall his former opportunities of making gain. The sorrowful and the unsuccessful periods of life, we would readily abandon: but all the hours which have been chearful, prosperous, or successful, we would be desirous of redeeming, and living over again. In such ways to *redeem the time*, would be only to have it in our power again to mis-spend it, or at best to em-

* Chap. ii. 1, 2.

† Rev. iii. 1.

ploy it for mere worldly purposes. To redeem it in such ways, is impossible: time once past is irrecoverable; the very latest moments of the last year, and of yesterday, are already as much beyond our reach, as the years and days which were before the flood. The only way in which we can *redeem the time*, is to employ the future better than we have employed the past; it is, from the experience of the past, to learn to act more wisely for the time to come, correcting the faults which we have formerly committed, pursuing the improvements which we have hitherto neglected, and using the opportunities which we have often carelessly let slip.

For our thus redeeming the time, it is necessary to look back to the past, with a resolution to apply it to the direction of the future. That we therefore may thus redeem the time, let us in the beginning of this year, review our past time, and particularly our past year, on purpose to learn how we may make a better use of our time, in the present year, and in all our future years. That we may review it with the greater distinctness, and with the greater advantage, let us consider our past time:

FIRST, In respect of itself;

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, In respect of the events which it brought along with it; and

THIRDLY, In respect of the manner in which we have employed it.

FIRST, Let us consider our past time in respect of itself.

TIME considered simply in itself, is a trust committed to us by God; and it is a most important trust, and committed to us for the most important of all purposes, for providing for eternity, for avoiding the misery of hell, and for obtaining the everlasting joys of heaven. Our time is short; it is likewise so uncertain that we know not but it may expire in a single hour; its shortness and uncertainty render it a trust the more important; for still it is the only season allowed us for securing our everlasting interests. Being so important, time ought not to be wasted. Whenever the care of our souls is neglected, time is wasted, about whatever else it has been employed. Pleasure is alluring; innocent pleasure we are not required to refuse: riches are convenient; by honest means we are allowed to pursue them: honour and power are desirable; we are not forbidden to aspire after them with moderation. But in the pursuit neither of pleasure,

sure, nor of riches, nor of power and honour, ought our whole time to be employed: it ought to be employed chiefly in seeking after the delights, the treasures, the dignities, the glories of immortality.

To which of these pursuits has your past time, to which of them has your last year been devoted? Examine this question seriously: it is a very serious inquiry; and it is each of you, for himself, that can determine it.—Does conscience testify, that your past time, that your last year, has been devoted to the care of your souls, has been employed for their salvation, has contributed to their improvement in goodness? Happy may you, with reason, be in the pleasing consciousness: you have no need to *redeem the time*: you have spent it well. Continue to do so; spend this year as you did the last; spend it as much better as you can. If you do not, you will henceforth lose your time, and forfeit all the advantage which you have gained. The whole of this life is the *day* allotted us for our preparation for eternity; as long as the day lasts, we *must work the works of him that sent us* *. Then when *the night cometh*, we shall *fall asleep in Christ* †; we shall *rest from our labours*, our

* John ix. 4.

† 1 Cor. xv. 18.

*works shall follow us**, and spring up into everlasting blessedness. — But does any of you, after careful self-examination, find that your last year has not promoted your salvation, that it has been spent in sin, that it is gone without bringing you to repentance? Which of you have reason to form this melancholy judgment concerning yourselves, it is impossible for me to say: but in so numerous an assembly, there must be many who have reason to form it, and who deceive themselves if they form it not. You have lost your precious time; *redeem* it without delay. Begin immediately to *work out your salvation* †, employ this year in working it out with diligence. To lose any longer time, would be desperate folly: *the night cometh, wherein no man can work* ‡; you know not how soon it cometh, the day of human life is not, like the natural day, of a known and equable duration; there are clouds which unexpectedly overcast the sunshine of life, and often bring on night and darkness at noon. *Give glory, therefore, to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness* ||

* Rev. xiv. 13. † Phil. ii. 12. ‡ John ix. 4. || Jer. xiii. 16.

SECONDLY, Let us consider our past time, in respect of the events which it brought along with it. Time brings along with it *opportunities*; and it brings along with it *temptations*. To these two, all possible events may be reduced, in relation to their influence on our behaviour and our state.

EVERY portion of time brings valuable *opportunities* along with it; your last year brought you many opportunities. Every hour gives an opportunity for the practice of some Christian duty, for some act of self-government, for some exercise of piety, or for some work of beneficence. How many such opportunities has the last year presented to every one of us? Recollect them carefully; ponder them attentively. Every one of our opportunities has been either improved, or neglected. The only portions of our time, which we have no need to redeem, are those whose opportunities we have improved. The remembrance of them will elevate our hearts with spiritual joy and with triumphant hope. May they be many, of which we can have this glad remembrance! It will give us the sincerest, the purest, the most solid happiness of which a mortal man is capable. Let our blessed experience of it in any past instance, encourage us to seize and to improve our future opportunities

tunities with still greater alacrity and assiduity, that our joy may grow, that our joy may be full. Then shall we employ all the coming days of our lives continually better and better, ever *abounding in the work of the Lord* *. *Herein shall our Father be glorified* †; and hereby great shall be our reward in heaven ‡.—But alas, who among us can survey his past life, who among us can survey a single year, nay a single day of it, and say with truth, that we have laid hold of all the opportunities of doing our duty, of improving ourselves in holiness, of fitting ourselves for heaven, which it put into our hands? Many, very many of those talents which our Lord has delivered to us, each of us has neglected to employ to advantage; we have *laid them up in a napkin* ||; we have *hid them in the earth* §; we have suffered them to remain useless, we have even lost them. Of all this we must give an account to our Lord at his return: for all this let us now call ourselves to an account, that *judging ourselves*, we may *not be judged by him* **. The best of us have let many an opportunity slip: *redeem the opportunity*; so the text may be translated, and so it is understood by several interpreters. Reflect, what are the opportunities which you have lost, by what means you were

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

† John xv. 8.

‡ Mat. v. 12.

§ Luke

xix. 20.

§ Mat. xxv. 13.

** 1 Cor. xi. 31.

led to lose them, and in what manner you might have improved them: guard against similar neglects for the future; look out hereafter for every opportunity of well-doing, that you may seize it the moment it occurs. Though you should not be so negligent of your opportunities as to prevent your salvation, yet every degree of negligence will lessen your reward: *the servant* who had *gained only five pounds*, was set over only *five cities*; but he who had *gained ten pounds*, was raised to *authority over ten cities* *. Some of us, I fear, like the thoughtless spendthrift who dissipates his whole fortune, have let slip all their past opportunities of doing good and becoming happy. Such have been slothful and wicked servants. Flee from ruin: instantly begin to redeem the opportunity; reflect that for all your present and for all your future opportunities you will be brought into judgment: be careful to employ them so that you may be able to *stand in the judgment* †: the more numerous the opportunities are which you have already lost, the greater in proportion should be your future diligence.

WE have all had many opportunities; but our opportunities have been different. No two

* Luke xix. 17. 19.

† Psal. i. 5.

of us have been in precisely the same situation; and every situation affords its peculiar opportunities. Each of you, recollect your own situation, and the opportunities which it gave you. I cannot enumerate the situations or the opportunities of you all. But for your assistance, I shall mention some of the most general and comprehensive varieties of situation; and while I mention them, each of you ask your own conscience, how you have improved such of them as have belonged to you.—You have enjoyed health, and you still enjoy it. It is the opportunity for industry both in your temporal and in your spiritual concerns. Have you employed your health in industry for both? Whenever you have health, be careful to employ it in this manner.—Or, you have been broken with sickness and groaned under disease. It may happen again: some time or other it will happen to every one of us. Sickness brings the opportunity for learning patience, and for exercising meekness and resignation. Have you exercised these in your distress? Whenever you are in distress, neglect not to exercise them.—You have been busy in the occupations of active life. These present opportunities for the practice of justice, honesty, truth, fidelity, equity. Have you, or have you not, practised these virtues? Practise them whenever you are busy in your callings.

ings.—Or, it may be, you have retired from business, or had intervals of leisure. These gave you opportunity for entering into yourselves, for considering your ways, for strengthening virtuous principles, for deepening religious impressions in your hearts. Did you improve them for these purposes? You will often hereafter enjoy leisure and retirement. Improve it always for these purposes.—You have lived from year to year in affluence, or you have been prosperous last year, and found your wealth increased. This was the season for thankfulness to God, and for an increase of your beneficence and charity to the needy. Persist in this conduct, if you have begun it: make up for your past neglects, by additional thankfulness to the giver, and enlarged beneficence to men, in every future season of plenty and success.—Or, your lot has been scantiness and straits; your fortune has been diminished; your riches have fled. This is the situation which gives scope for contentment, submission, and trust in him whose unerring wisdom orders all the vicissitudes of things. You ought to have improved it, and to continue to improve it for cherishing these graces.—Last year has, perhaps, found and left you living cheerfully with your friends and family, rejoicing in the welfare of the husband or the wife of your affections, and in the improve-

ments of your darling children. This year the same happiness may continue. It is one of the sweetest joys of human life. It calls for the fervours of thanksgiving, the ardours of social love, and the chearfullest alertness in practising all our duties.—But last year has wounded the hearts of some of you with pungent sorrow for the unkindness of relations, the cruelty of acquaintance, the death of the revered parent, the supporting husband, the soothing wife, the pleasant child, or the beloved friend. These are the scenes of the tenderest sorrow. But they are likewise the opportunities for learning patience, resignation, fortitude, the vanity of this world, and the value of the next.

2. TIME brings along with it, not only opportunities for virtuous practice and improvement, but also *temptations* to vice and degeneracy. Every year and every day of our lives exposes us to temptations: and to reflect on the temptations to which we have hitherto been exposed, will both enable us to form a just judgment concerning the past, and serve for our direction in the future. Our temptations have been either resisted or complied with: from considering deliberately, whether we have resisted them or complied with them, we may derive great advantage. Have we re-
sisted

sisted them? Have we avoided the vices into which they would have led us? Have we persisted in practising the duties which they solicited us to neglect? So far we have been conquerors; and may rejoice in our victory: we have improved the time; let us continue to improve it. It will be shameful to fall at length before the enemy whom we have often vanquished, and to fall before him after, by frequent victories, he has been weakened, and we have been strengthened. Yet even our former victories may contribute to our falling: they may render us confident, presumptuous, and negligent. Guard against this abuse of your success. Let the difficulty which you experienced in resisting former temptations, preserve you vigilant, and ever mindful of the necessity of caution and exertion. Whatever were the means which contributed to your success in past instances, employ the same means in every future hour of trial.—But of the temptations which have assaulted us, how many have prevailed against us! What have these been? Into what sins have they betrayed us? By what means did they seduce us? The examination of these particulars will be unpleasant: it will force upon us an humiliating sense of our own weakness; it will fill us with remorse for our guilt. But without submitting to it, we must continue to be vanquished in
guilt

Y 3

every

every trial, to degenerate more and more, and become the slaves of sin. Those periods of time in which we have corrupted ourselves by yielding to temptations, we have very great need to redeem. We can redeem them, only by resisting these temptations when they again attack us, and by resisting every temptation for the future, more strenuously than we have resisted any in time past. To this, the recollection and the permanent sense of our former defeats will be subservient, by rendering us diffident of ourselves, circumspect, dependent on the grace of God, *instant in prayer* * for his assistance, careful to fly from temptations, suspicious of the arts by which we have been formerly beguiled, jealous of the inadvertencies by which we have given sin an advantage against us.

Every place is full of temptations, every season abounds with them. Every man, according to his peculiar circumstances, has his own temptations, against which he is chiefly concerned to defend himself: his situation either puts him in danger of committing some particular sins, or exposes him to some particular mode of seduction. By reflecting on the variety of our past conditions, each of us may

bring
 E Y

bring to his remembrance the temptations to which he in particular has been exposed: Youth and high health contain temptations to levity, to dissipation, to unlawful pleasure, to thoughtlessness about death and eternity. Sickness puts us in danger of peevishness, murmuring, and impatience. A busy life is apt to render men worldly minded, intent upon earthly things, regardless of God and religion. A life of idleness, or even of leisure, leads men into excessive or unlawful amusement, and into all the vices which spring from the want of good employment. A state of prosperity and affluence contains temptations to pride, insolence, presumption, luxury, insensibility to the miseries of mankind. Poverty leads to discontent, anxiety, complaints against Providence, abjectness of spirit, or dishonesty. The temptations belonging to the several situations in which you have hitherto been placed, each of you for himself should recollect; that, if you have resisted them, you may know how to resist them still, and thus improve your future time; that if you have yielded to them, you may henceforth redeem the time, by no longer yielding to them.

THIRDLY, We may consider our past time in respect of the manner in which we have employed it. It was impossible to exclude this

view of it altogether, under the former head ; for events are what give occasion for particular instances of behaviour, and our behaviour has always a congruity to the situations in which we are placed : but it will throw new light on the subject, and give farther direction for our *redeeming the time*, to survey the past part of it, as either *well-employed*, or *ill-employed*, or *trifled away*.

1. OUR past time and our last year may have been *well-employed*. Let each of us examine himself, what part of it he has employed well. The business of this life is to make preparation for the next. Whatever time we have spent in the practice of any virtue, has been well spent ; it has been spent for the great purpose of our being. While we are practising any virtue, we are going directly forward towards heaven : *the way of righteousness*, and *the way everlasting* is the same. The hours which we have employed in sincere devotion, in praying to God, in praising him, in adoring the perfections of his nature, in humbling ourselves before him, confessing our sins, exercising repentance and exciting ourselves to amendment under a sense of his immediate and awful presence ; the hours in which our hearts have been truly engaged in these duties, in secret, in our families, or in the public assemblies of Christians ;

the hours in which we have been indulging the silent workings of love, reverence, resignation towards God, or cherishing these pious affections by meditation and retirement from the world: all these hours have been well-employed; they have been employed in strengthening and in exercising the first and noblest of the virtues, the great principles of all right conduct, those principles which alone can preserve us steadfast in good practice. The hours which we employed in serious consideration of the great truths of our holy religion, of our state and our obligations, of the vanity of earthly things, of the frailty of life, of our latter end, of the important concerns of eternity: these have been well-employed; they have contributed to excite us to our principal business. The hours which you have spent in controlling any of your appetites and passions: the hour in which you resisted the allurements of pleasure; the hour in which you stopped your ears against the licentious jest or the *corrupt communication* *, in which you struggled against the thought of impurity and laboured to banish it; the hour in which you refused to look upon the wine when it was red, when it gave its colour in the cup, when it moved itself aright †; the hour in which you curbed

* Ephes. iv. 29. Col. iii. 8.

† Prov. xxiii. 31.

a rising inclination to excess; recollected yourselves; and made your escape from the company which was running into riot: the hour in which you repressed the motions of anger, the effusions of peevishness, the suggestions of envy, the impulses of malice or revenge; all these hours have been well-employed, employed in purifying your hearts from dispositions which would render you unfit for heaven, and treasure up misery and anguish for you. The hours which you have spent in the exercise of social love, in doing good offices, in relieving the indigent, in assisting the helpless, in patronizing the friendless, in comforting the sorrowful, in softening the injurious, in discharging the duties of your several relations; these have been well-spent, they have been useful to men, and they will be beneficial to your own souls. I will add, that the hours which you have spent in your lawful calling, whatever it be, the hours in which you have carried on your ordinary business, diligently, honestly, and conscientiously, have been well-spent, and have promoted your eternal salvation. That part of your time which has been employed in such ways as these, stands in little need of being redeemed; it has not been lost. Be solicitous to employ your remaining time no worse. Be even solicitous to employ it better: in our best-spent hours, in the duties

to

to which we have applied ourselves with the greatest vigour, many imperfections have adhered to us: labour to wear off your imperfections by degrees. Many, however, as our imperfections have been, it were happy for us that we could reflect on all our past time as employed in the ways which have been mentioned. But alas, this is not the case.

2. Our past time may have been, a great part of it has been *ill-employed*. All the time that we have spent in sin, has been mis-spent in dishonouring God, in corrupting our own hearts, in labouring for misery. We have need to redeem it. If we would redeem it, we must search out the sins which we have committed, and set them in order before our eyes, in all their baseness and all their guilt; that by the view of them we may excite ourselves to avoid every sin hereafter. If we will not, we must continue to repeat the same sins, to run into other sins, and to abuse to our own destruction all the years which God is pleased to give us for *obtaining salvation* *. Have you spent any part of your time without a sense of God? or have you spent it in direct outrages against his majesty, in swearing, in profaning his name, in murmuring against the

* 1 Thess. v. p.

dispensations of his providence? Have you wasted his sabbaths in listless idleness, or in attention to your worldly business? Have you suffered them to slip away, one after another, without any meditation on religious truth or moral obligation, without doing any thing to encrease your knowledge of the principles of the gospel, or to confirm your attachment to its duties? Have you spent any of your days in prosecuting an unjust design, in catching at dishonest gain, in oppressing the weak, in imposing on the ignorant, in *treading upon the poor**, in executing the dictates of malice or of resentment? Have you prostituted any of your hours to the purposes of drunkenness, debauchery, or unlawful pleasure? Every hour that you have spent in the practice of any vice, is in the very worst sense lost. It is not only spent without advantage; it has been highly pernicious. It has produced effects on your temper and your state, which it will require great labour to retrieve, but which will ruin your souls, if they be not retrieved. It is only by sincere and hearty repentance, by *amending your ways and your doings*†, by *ceasing to do evil and learning to do well*‡, by a firm resolution, and strenuous and continued care to abstain from every vice, and to practise every

* Amos v. 11.

† Jer. vii. 3.

‡ Isa. i. 16, 17.

virtue for the future, that you can *redeem the time* which you have squandered in sinful courses, that you can efface the traces of depravity with which it has marked your souls, that you can repair the havock which it has made in your spiritual condition. *Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day* *. It cannot bear delay. Your days are few. Many of them, already past, have been so mis-employed as to lay up in store labour and sorrow for your succeeding days. How many of them, even your own most careful recollection can but imperfectly inform you. The more days you have thus mis-spent, the more sins you have to unlearn, the deeper corruption you have to eradicate; and the less time remains for accomplishing the arduous task. Lose no part of that little time. Short-lived creatures as we are, we cannot afford to employ a single hour in sinful courses:

3. A GREAT part of our past time has been trifled away. It too needs to be redeemed. If it has not been abused to bad purposes, yet it has not been used to any good purpose. Whatever part of our time has contributed nothing to the improvement of our souls,

* Ecclus. v. 7.

though

though it has not been employed in corrupting them; whatever part has not promoted our salvation, though it has not directly counteracted it, has been trifled away. A very great part of our time is necessarily spent in such a manner as can have no influence on our preparation for eternity. So far as this is necessary, it is not blameable: it is but one instance of the imperfection of our nature. Infancy and childhood is the age of trifling: reason is dormant; the sense of good and evil is but beginning to shew itself; the faculties are too imperfectly opened for a just conception of things spiritual and eternal. Through all the periods of life, a considerable proportion of our time must be spent in sleep, in exercise, relaxation, and amusement, needful for the health and vigour of the body, as well as for the soundness and alacrity of the mind. How great a part of your past time has thus elapsed? If in these things you have not exceeded the bounds of moderation, it has passed innocently: but still it has been no-wise subservient to the important purposes of eternity. Since, then, so great a part of our time has slipped away, and must continue to slip away, without promoting these purposes, can we be too diligent in making the best use of those parts of it which are capable of promoting them? But which of us can say, that we have

3

spent

spent no more time than was necessary, in these ways, or that we have wasted none of it in listless indolence, counting the tedious hours, and wishing that they would pass more swiftly? What is the whole life of many, but one uninterrupted series of thoughtlessness, levity, and dissipation? Does this become creatures who, amidst all the avocations of this short life, must make preparation for eternity? Redeem the time which you have thus sauntered away, by henceforth spending no more of your time unprofitably, than is absolutely unavoidable. The husbandman or the artificer reckons only upon his working-days for making provision for his family. The industrious merchant looks upon the hours as lost, that are diverted from his trade. Let your time be employed as constantly as possible, in some profitable business, that you may avoid the folly and the temptations of idleness. Never indulge yourselves in relaxation and amusement, when you have a call to any useful office. Render your very relaxations, as far as their nature can permit, indirectly subservient to your salvation, by taking care that they be always such as render you fitter for those employments which directly promote it.

I HAVE now endeavoured to assist and direct you in reviewing your past time, so that you
may

may *redeem* it; that you may more than ever employ it for its proper end; that you may improve the opportunities which you have formerly neglected, and improve those better which you have improved well already; that you may resist the temptations to which you have formerly yielded, and continue to resist those which you have hitherto resisted; that you may persist in employing your time well, in those instances in which you have been accustomed to employ it well; and that, by your future circumspection and diligence, you may in some measure retrieve those parts of it which you have either mis-spent or trifled away. To *redeem the time*, is of great importance, and of real necessity to us all. The best are capable of great improvement, and are bound to make a constant progress to the very end of their lives. But if there be any of you who have yet done nothing for eternity, without speedily redeeming the time, you must be ruined for ever: *now it is high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand**: *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead†*. Ye aged men and aged women, instantly redeem the time: your remaining opportunity must be very short: not a moment of it ought ye to lose. Ye healthful,

* Rom. xiii. 11, 12.

† Eph. v. 14.

ye strong, ye vigorous, you also should redeem the time: defer it not: *what is even your strength that you should hope? Is your strength the strength of stones? or is your flesh of brass †?* your strength is not for ever; your vigour will soon decay; your health will quickly be turned into disease; you will be called into the eternal world, and you must obey the call whether you be or be not prepared for it. Even you, ye young, are not exempt from obligation to redeem the time; the youngest of you have already lost some time: the sooner you begin to redeem it, the easier will be your work, and the more profitably and happily will all the rest of your days be spent: if you begin not to redeem it now, even you may have no opportunity of redeeming it; young, blooming, gay, sprightly as you are, even you shall go down to the chambers of death *, even you are hastening to the grave where there is no work nor device †.

† Job vi. 11, 12.

* Prov. vii. 27.

† Eccles. ix. 10.

ye strong, ye vigorous, ye able should re-
deem the time: after it not: when is even
your strength, but you should hope? Is your
strength the strength of horses? or is your
strength? your strength is not for ever;
your vigour will soon decay; your health will
quickly be turned into disease; you will be
called into the eternal world, and you must
obey the call whether you be or be not pre-
pared for it. Even you, ye young, are not
exempt from obligation to redeem the time:
the youngest of you have already lost some
time: the sooner you begin to redeem it, the
easier will be your work, and the more pro-
sperously and happily will all the rest of your
days be spent: if you begin not to redeem it
now, even you may have no opportunity of
redeeming it: young, blooming, gay, sprightly,
as you are, even you shall go down to the
number of the dead: even you are hastening to
the grave, where there is no work nor device.

Job vi. 17. "Trow ye seed in the fallow."

SERMON

S E R M O N XV.

THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY CONFIRMED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH ITS EVIDENCES WERE PROPOSED*.

Preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, May 23, 1765, at the Opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

JOHN viii. 14.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.

IN the preceding part of this chapter, we are informed that some Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, asking his judgment in the case, and prepared to take advantage against him, whatever his determination should be. But he disconcerted their malice by his wisdom, and afterwards affirmed the

Though this argument be prosecuted at large in *DISSENT. II.* on subjects relating to the *genius and the evidences of Christianity*, it is not perhaps superfluous or useless to exhibit its force collected into a narrower compass, which may happen to obtain for it a more general attention.

excellence of his own character and office, *saying, I am the light of the world* *. The Pharisees censured this as vain-glorious boasting, characteristical of an impostor; *Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true* †. He answers in the text, *Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true*. The answer is not applicable only to that one occasion: it naturally implies this general sentiment; that Christ Jesus proposed and urged the evidences of his mission in a manner which, far from lessening their weight, makes an addition to it.

THERE is scarcely any test of truth, less ambiguous than this, That it becomes more undeniable, the more severely it is examined, and the more various the lights in which it is viewed. Christianity has many features perceivable at first sight, which intimate its divine original: but every new attitude in which it can be placed, discovers additional marks of its divinity. The strength of its several evidences considered in themselves, has been often and fully displayed. The manner in which these evidences were at first proposed, has not been so commonly attended to. That that manner contains many separate presumptions of the truth of Christianity, it shall be the business of this discourse to evince.

* Ver. 12.

† Ver. 13.

SERM.XV. *Manner in which it was proposed.* 357

IN prosecution of this design, it will be necessary to examine distinctly, *first*, the manner in which Christ and his apostles proposed the evidences of the gospel *originally*; and *secondly*, the manner in which they proposed them in consequence of *opposition*.

First, LET us attend to the manner in which Christ and his apostles proposed the evidences of the gospel originally, that is, in addressing those who had not yet shewn prejudices, or raised objections against the gospel.

IN this situation, they simply *exhibited* the evidences of their mission, without either illustrating their strength by reasoning, or studiously preventing objections against them. They published doctrines really excellent; but they did not affect on every occasion, either to assert that they are excellent, or to affirm that their excellence proves their divinity. They wrought miracles actually attended with all the circumstances which could contribute to their credibility, and to their force; but they were not at pains to show by arguments, in what manner, or how much, the several circumstances contributed to the one purpose or to the other. In many instances, they discovered their knowledge of the hearts of men, and they predicted future events; but they left

men to conclude of themselves from these instances, that they had a divine mission; they scarcely ever drew the inference. They proved Jesus to be the Messiah, from ancient prophecies: but they proved it in the simplest manner; sometimes by only appealing to the Old Testament in general; often by barely quoting a particular passage; always without justifying the application by subtile reasoning. That this was uniformly their manner, in proposing the evidences of their mission originally, or to those who did not directly show a spirit of opposition, might be proved by a large detail of instances from the New Testament; but that would be tedious, and in this auditory it is not necessary.

BUT does not this representation of their manner give countenance to an objection which has been urged against Christianity, that it was not, in its first publication, founded upon argument? It does not give countenance, so much as in appearance, to this objection in the most important sense of it: it implies not in the remotest manner that Christianity is not founded on, or, to speak more properly, supported by, just and rational evidence; for the observations which we have made, relate not at all to the matter of the evidence, but merely to the manner of proposing it. But
does

does it not give a colour for affirming at least, that the evidence of the gospel was proposed in an improper and imperfect manner? If it give a *colour* for this objection, it gives no more. This manner is no real presumption against the truth of Christianity; on the contrary, it is a strong presumption for it.

It is no presumption against the truth of Christianity: for that manner was neither improper nor imperfect; it was sufficient for producing belief, in the circumstances in which it was used. If the gospel, in its first publication, was not supported by *argument*, it was notwithstanding supported by *evidence*. Evidence is different from reasoning: evidence perceived is the immediate cause of belief; reasoning is but one means of bringing men to perceive the evidence; and it is a means which is far from being necessary in every case. The strongest conviction possible is produced by simple intuition. The evidence of natural and moral truths, and in general of all matters of fact, requires not a process of reasoning, in order to its being perceived: a fact is exhibited, and from it a conclusion concerning another fact is directly inferred: the natural constitution of the mind determines us to make the inference, and to adopt it, without any comparison of ideas. The evi-

dences of the gospel are facts, miracles for instance, the perception of which leads the mind naturally to infer the truth of the gospel. The facts are perceived without reasoning; and when they are perceived, the conclusion is likewise deduced without reasoning. Natural evidence is, by the original formation of the soul, adapted to the understanding; there are principles of belief essential to man, on which it lays hold, and by means of which it produces immediate conviction in the unperverted. Christ exhibited evidence in a way fit for operating on the natural principles of belief; he made men to perceive the facts from which the truth of his mission directly followed: this was enough; it is the very method by which men are daily convinced in similar cases.

EVIDENCE of every kind admits reasoning: the evidence of our religion is capable of copious illustrations and defences by argument. But it is in no case necessary in order to conviction, that a person attend to all the reasonings of which the subject is susceptible. If he perceive the evidence without them, it would be altogether superfluous. It deserves to be remarked also, that the evidences of the gospel do not appear in the very same light to us, in which they appeared to those to whom they were originally proposed. Our situation
differs

SERM. XV. *Manner in which it was proposed.* 361

differs from theirs in many circumstances ; and it is from these circumstances that most of the reasonings arise, which have been introduced into the defence of Christianity. For our conviction, reasoning may be necessary : but it by no means follows, that it was necessary for convincing *them* ; their situation gave not the same occasion for it. To them the evidence was directly exhibited ; if it was real and natural evidence, it would produce belief in them.

THEIR conviction would likewise be entirely rational. We are apt to regard nicety in canvassing evidence, and scrupulosity in admitting it, with too favourable an eye. What renders assent irrational, is its being yielded to improper evidence, not its being yielded readily to such as is proper. Assent is always rational, when it is yielded to real and just evidence : the more readily it is yielded, it is the more rational. To be imposed upon by insufficient evidence, shows a defect of understanding : not to perceive natural evidence quickly, without a multitude of arguments and illustrations, shews an equal defect. The stomach is found when it digests easily by its own force : the eye is good when it perceives objects clearly without artificial assistances : true vigour of understanding is entirely similar. To those who
gave

gave no signs of their being distempered with incredulity, the evidences of Christianity were simply exhibited : this is no presumption against Christianity ; it was sufficient for producing firm and rational belief in such.

THIS manner is in several ways a very strong presumption for Christianity.

FAR from implying that no real evidence was given, it necessarily implies that the evidence was strong. The strongest evidence in every kind operates most quickly on the understanding : if evidence be weak or doubtful, its force cannot be at all perceived without the aid of reasoning and illustration. It is certain that the evidence of the gospel was at first merely exhibited ; it is equally certain that many were in fact convinced by the first proposal of it ; it is therefore undeniable that its evidence was not only real, but also strong. Men are very credulous, they often believe without just evidence : we confess it. But it is only when the want of evidence is concealed by specious reasoning, or by some other artifice. This was not the case in the original publication of the gospel. If there had been any defect in its evidence, the defect must have been perceived, for no means at all were used to hide it. If the evidence had not been strong,

strong, it could not possibly have produced belief, for it was barely shown. Very certain truths have been rejected, because the proof of them was not sufficiently urged: but there never was a falsehood successfully inculcated by a naked and artless exhibition of pretended evidence.

AGAIN, This manner was the fittest possible for convincing the unprejudiced. The more simply evidence can be proposed, consistently with clearness, the better it answers its end. Whenever reasoning is not necessary, it burdens the evidence, and perplexes the understanding. This is in a peculiar manner true of matters of fact, which we are naturally formed for inferring immediately, at a single step; and it holds especially when the bulk of mankind are addressed. Propose to an ordinary man evidence really suited to the nature of the subject; he assents without hesitation: enter upon the discussions which ingenuity has introduced into every subject; he understands you not. Every man is made capable of being convinced by real evidence; but many cannot comprehend the subtleties of disputation. Christianity was intended for the use of the generality, not for the entertainment of the curious. If its evidence was real, simply to present it would most effectually produce belief

lief in an ordinary man: if it was not fit for producing belief when thus proposed, it was not adapted to the bulk of mankind. God has suited its evidence to their powers; Christ has proposed it in the manner fittest for convincing them: by this it is declared, not obscurely, that the gospel is the offspring of the same wisdom which fixed the human constitution.

THIS manner is likewise most suitable to the character of a divine teacher. It sets Jesus in direct opposition to impostors. They magnify slender evidence: they can produce no better, and therefore they labour to persuade men by every art, that what they have produced is considerable. It becomes a teacher truly sent from God, to give, on the contrary, evidence of his mission, fit in its own nature for producing belief; and, conscious of its inherent strength, to propose it without show. In Mahomet we find the former manner, in Christ the latter, in perfection: that looks very like imposture; this bears the unequivocal features of truth. When a man asserts at every turn, that his arguments are strong, it is at least suspicious: one who has no design to bias the judgment, proposes his reasons, and leaves them to make their strength to be felt. Simplicity of manner is always an indication

SERM. XV. *Manner in which it was proposed.* 365

indication of truth ; and Jesus possessed it in the highest degree.

THIS shows likewise that he was conscious of his title to the character which he claimed. A person who knows that he intends to deceive, is naturally suspicious. But Jesus discovers no anxiety to foresee and prevent difficulties ; and his apostles relate things as they knew them to be, without any appearance of concern about the consequences. This is that honest confidence which flows naturally from integrity, which a deceiver never can put on : it proves them to be what they said they were.

SIMPLICITY of manner is moreover an indication of genuine dignity. Mahomet affected dignity ; but it was of a false kind, and it was totally misplaced. He haughtily disdained to give evidence of his mission : to have given it, was absolutely incumbent on him. At the same time he made an ostentation of evidence : it was in avoiding this, that true greatness would have appeared : this betrayed a littleness of mind ; it showed his dignity to be affected at other times, only to hide the want of evidence. Jesus assumed a high character : but his manner showed that it belonged to him ; it was a plain expression of it : he sustained it with natural ease, and unaffected majesty : he gave

gave evidence very readily; he disdained only to display it with parade and ostentation; *Truly this was the Son of God* *!

Thus the manner in which the evidences of the gospel were originally proposed, contains many presumptions of its truth. They are so strong that, if you suppose it false, it must appear unaccountable that ever that manner should have been adopted, and impossible that ever it could have succeeded.

BUT proper as this manner was, it did not secure Christianity from opposition. Vice and prejudice suggested many objections against its evidences; they were proposed to Christ and his apostles; and they induced them to depart from their ordinary manner of simply exhibiting evidence, and to adopt a different manner, the examination of which was the *second* part of our design.

IN what manner, then, did Christ support his claim, when he addressed those who formed objections, or listened to them? He asserted his mission, and avowed his character, in the most peremptory and explicit terms. In confuting mens cavils, in illustrating what had

* Mat. xxvii. 54.

occasioned them, in correcting their mistakes, in instilling juster principles, he often gave a more ample exhibition of excellent doctrine: he asserted likewise that the gospel is excellent; and he urged its excellence as a proof of its divinity. He reminded those who opposed him, of the miracles which he had wrought; he affirmed expressly and frequently, that they were wrought on purpose to prove his mission, and establish his doctrine. It was denied that his miracles had force enough to prove that he came from God; they were even ascribed to magic: he demonstrated the absurdity of the charge, and vindicated their force by clear and solid argument. He moreover showed in several instances, that his miracles were direct evidences of the principal doctrines of his religion, as being actual, experienced exertions of the very powers which these doctrines ascribed to him, or of the most similar powers that could be rendered objects of sense. He often appealed in express terms to particular ancient predictions, and showed that they were fulfilled in himself. The Jews had formed a very inadequate idea of the Messiah, and were hindered from perceiving that Jesus was he, by their overlooking some whole predictions, and some capital circumstances in other predictions, concerning him: our Saviour pointed out these, and reasoned from them, in order to perfect
 101 2 their

their idea of the Messiah, and remove their prejudices against himself. They observed in Jesus some characters inconsistent with the conception of the Messiah, which they thought they had derived from the prophets: he showed, that these characters were truly consistent with the prophetical descriptions of the Messiah, nay often that they were plainly included in them. They missed in him some characters which they ascribed to the Messiah: he proved, sometimes that he himself really had these characters, and at other times that their expectation of finding them in the Messiah, proceeded only from their ignorance of the true meaning of the prophecies. The opposition which was made to him, led him not only to illustrate and urge the evidences of his mission separately, but also to collect them together, and display their united force. Time will not allow me, either to produce examples of these several particulars, or to show how closely and with how great propriety the apostles imitated their master in all of them. We proceed therefore to enquire, what advantages Christianity has derived from this alteration in the manner of proposing its evidences.

By means of this alteration, the truth of Christianity is rendered more immediately evident, and the defence of it easier and shorter ;

for by it considerable difficulties are avoided, and plausible objections prevented. By claiming a divine mission so frequently and so explicitly, Christ rendered it indisputable that he intended his whole doctrine to stand on the authority of a divine revelation. This has a very great and extensive influence on the manner of examining the truth of Christianity: it makes it plain, that very many of the most specious arguments of infidels are really nothing at all to the purpose; that no objection against any particular doctrines of Christianity is of weight in the question, except it show that they cannot possibly be true; that therefore the only question is, whether Christ had in fact a divine mission, and that this can be legitimately determined in no other way but by a close examination of the positive evidence produced. If this evidence is not directly confuted, his authority is alone sufficient for proving that any doctrine which in its nature may be true, is true; it demands our unreserved assent to whatever he really taught. By his express declarations of the intention of his miracles, he has rendered their connexion with his doctrine obvious; no man can honestly overlook it, or represent them as mere unmeaning acts of skill or power. The frequency of his appeals to prophecy, removes all manner of difficulty in determining, whether he

claimed the high character of the Messiah, or only that of an ordinary prophet. Every difficulty in revelation is magnified by infidels, into an objection against it : Christianity stands clear of many difficulties by the manner of its publication ; to a certain degree it is what infidels would wish : is this no indication of its truth ? It is the most considerable, because it could be accomplished, without forfeiting other great advantages, by no possible means except the delicate and singular conjunction of contrary manners, which Jesus introduced.

As the manner in which he supported his mission on occasion of opposition, prevents some objections, so it removes others. It gives us his own account of the nature and force of the evidences which he produced, and his own answers to several objections against them. Infidels have never confuted these ; they have scarcely attempted it. Is this reconcileable to candour ? Is it not an acknowledgment of weakness ? They ought to have begun with this ; by neglecting it, they have left a strong enemy behind, in possession of a fortress which they found impregnable ; and in consequence of this, all their advances are insecure, and their successes are but apparent. The reasonings of Jesus stand unanswered ; in them Christians may rest with the fullest assurance ;

ance; and in them they find, not only models for defences of their religion, but also principles directly applicable to the confutation of many of the objections which have been more lately raised against it.

THE manner which Christ adopted when he met with opposition, gives a new proof of the strength of the evidence which he produced. In convincing many when it was simply exhibited, its strength was exerted, and it was displayed by the exertion. But prejudice or indisposition of mind often hinders the strongest evidence from convincing all. In this case, the strength of the evidence can be shown only by reasoning; and by reasoning it may be shown that it ought to have convinced all. The evidence which Christ offered was examined; and by the examination, its strength was justified. That must be truth, which has evidence capable of a full vindication by solid argument.

THERE are many who cannot be convinced by the mere exhibition of evidence. The dis-tempered need medicine as well as food. Some are either inattentive, or prejudiced, or prone to doubt, or so fond of reasoning as to demand it in every case. These can be convinced only by an argumentative display of evidence.

Christ often met with such; he adapted his manner to them; he used the natural means of bringing them to believe. He did all that could be done for the conviction even of the most incredulous. Is not credit due to the teacher who never declined using any proper means of conviction? Is it no evidence of truth, that the gospel was capable of being supported by every kind of means?

BUT is there nothing in all this contrary to that simplicity which was remarked in his original manner, as a strong indication of his divine character and mission? Are there not assertions of his mission and dignity, appeals to the evidences which he had produced, professed displays of them, and threatenings against those who resisted them? But all these without exception were occasioned by opposition: this gives a full account of them. In this situation, they had entire propriety; they were even no more than justly varied expressions of the very characters which shone forth in his original manner.

TO hear and answer objections readily, when men raised them; to vindicate the evidences of his mission by reasoning, when their force was called in question, was even necessary for showing, that he was sincere in claim-
ing

ing a mission, and secure of his title to it. When a man's right is called in question, not to assert it, is to relinquish it.

OSTENTATION is inconsistent with true dignity : but to illustrate evidence after it has been misunderstood ; to enforce it by reasoning, on those who have not felt its force ; to claim whatever is at the same time proved to be due ; is not ostentation : it is truly the natural ease and condescension, which is so essential to genuine dignity, that pride finds it necessary to put it on. The contrary conduct would have plainly betrayed supercilious haughtiness.

It may be added, that the nature of all Christ's reasonings is expressive both of conscious truth and of real greatness. His reasonings are calculated, always for convincing, never for making a show of ingenuity : they contain nothing either mean, or weak, or artificial : they are all concise, direct, clear, and cogent. Impostors affect to disdain answering objections, or, instead of solving them by argument, they elude them by mere confident assertions, by artifice, or by declamation : in justifying the evidences of his mission, no less than in originally presenting them, Christ is a perfect contrast to impostors. He has not

a single lineament which is not the reverse of theirs: is it possible that he should nevertheless be one of them?

THUS, by Christ's vindication of his mission the features of divinity observable in his original manner, are only thrown into a new attitude. In the most opposite situations, he preserved the character uniform and consistent; he only varied the expressions of it, as the case required. Cunning will enable a man who only affects a character, to escape detection in one situation in which he has carefully practised his part: but if a man sustain it with equal propriety in sudden reverses of condition, it must be his real and natural character.

UPON the whole, the manner in which Christ *bare record to himself*, both originally, and in consequence of opposition, is in many ways a strong proof that his *record was true*. The manner proper to either of these situations, taken alone, has some defects, and it has some advantages; he has used the one manner, so as to correct the imperfections of the other; and he has united the opposite advantages of both. His whole manner, whether we consider it in relation to the conviction of men, or in relation to the character of a divine teacher, is absolutely perfect: there is nothing
5 wanting,

wanting, nothing superfluous, nothing misplaced. It has an excellence which has not yet been mentioned. It is an application of evidence, which shows the greatest strength of understanding, and the highest powers of reason. To judge unerringly, when evidence should be only exhibited, and when it is proper to enforce it; to present none that is not solid; to place every argument, by one happy turn, in a striking point of view; to preserve all this propriety throughout an address to mankind, continued for years; this is a pitch of excellence which uninspired persons attain, only when natural vigour of mind, and superior genius and penetration, are united with the best means of intellectual improvement. Neither Christ nor his apostles had an opportunity of attaining it by natural means: they must have owed it, therefore, to supernatural causes; they must have been, as they affirmed themselves to be, persons commissioned and inspired by God.

All these strong presumptions of truth and divinity tend directly to confirm our faith in the gospel. Faith will always operate on the heart and life, in proportion to its strength. Attention to the multitudes of circumstances, of the most various kinds, which concur in proclaiming that our religion is of

God, will enable us, unaffected by trivial objections, to rest in it with full assurance. Faith thus invigorated and enlivened, will not remain inactive; it will instigate all who are possessed of it, to the hearty obedience of the gospel. If such faith prevail in our hearts, my reverend fathers and brethren, it will moreover diffuse life and spirit through all our ministrations.

THE manner in which we have seen that the gospel was published at first, may likewise suggest to us many rules of great importance, both in our public and in our private addresses to mankind; particularly in relation to the best manner of communicating and inculcating religious truths: but I will leave these to be collected by your own reflections, rather than encroach upon your patience. Suffer me only to hint with the utmost brevity, that this example will direct us, to propose to our hearers, not abstruse notions or refined speculations, but plain truth; to exhibit it to their view, not in a dry analysis or laboured and artificial distribution, but in striking maxims, warm sentiments, and natural arrangement; to support it by solid evidence and convincing argument, not by abstract reasonings or intricate deductions, much less by forced interpretations, dubious positions, or plausible sophisms;

SERM.XV. *Manner in which it was proposed.* 377

phisms; to avoid altogether questions which are frivolous, unedifying, or interminable, and never without necessity to enter even on such points of nice discussion as seem to be of some importance and of possible solution; to express our instructions in the language of scripture and of common sense, not in the learned phraseology of either the ancient or the modern schools of science; to vary both the matter and the manner of our addresses, according to the capacities and situations of those for whom they are designed, and always so as to reach their understandings by the nearest and easiest road, and to touch their hearts with the greatest force; in one word, studiously to aim, never at displaying or even gratifying ourselves, but constantly and in all respects at profiting others, by bringing them to a firm faith of the simple principles of the gospel, by exciting them to a lively perception of them, and by persuading them to comply with their genuine intention *in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth* *.

* Eph. v. 9.

S E R M O N

himself; to avoid altogether questions which are frivolous, unedifying, or inapplicable; and never without necessity to enter even on such questions of nice distinction as seem to be of some importance and of possible solution; to express his instructions in the language of simplicity and of common sense; not in the learned jargonology of either the ancients or the moderns; to vary both the matter and the manner of his address, according to the capacities and situation of those for whom they are delivered; and always to be so well acquainted with his subject by the most exact and careful study, and to teach them heartily with the greatest ease; in one word, faithfully to himself, never displaying or even giving cause to suspect, constantly and in all respects, professing only by bringing them to a firm faith of the simple principles of the gospel, by existing them in a lively perception of them, and by persuading them to comply with their genuine obligation in all goodness and righteousness, and with a pure heart.

SECTION

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

S E R M O N XVI.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE VIRTUOUS
FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF EXTERNAL
GOOD.

PSALM xxxvii. 16.

*A little that a righteous man hath, is better than
the riches of many wicked.*

OF the different courses by which mankind pursue happiness, it must be acknowledged fair to give that the preference, which confers the greatest happiness when all circumstances are supposed equal. If it can be proved that the righteous are happier than the wicked in the same situation, it will follow undeniably that virtue is much more favourable than vice to our interest in the present world; and that, without taking the rewards of eternity into the account, virtue ought to be the choice of every prudent man. But even this is not all that can be said with truth in behalf of virtue: my text puts the case much stronger; *A little that a righteous man*
man

380 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVI.

man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked: a small portion of the good things of the world, gives the virtuous man more real enjoyment, not than the same portion, but more than affluence, than riches, nay than the riches of many joined together, can yield to the vicious.

WERE we fully convinced of this, it must recommend virtue very strongly, for it would urge us to the practice of it from a regard to our present happiness. In order to convince us of this salutary truth, I shall illustrate and confirm the psalmist's maxim, by shewing,

FIRST, That a good man has *greater* enjoyment from a little, than the wicked can have from the largest fortune; and

SECONDLY, That he has more *durable* enjoyment.

FIRST, A good man, has *greater* enjoyment, purer and more solid satisfaction, from a little, than the wicked can have from the largest fortune.

It will scarcely be denied by any person who at all reflects, either that outward possessions can make us happy only so far as we

enjoy

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 381

enjoy them, or that the foundation of enjoyment must be laid in ourselves. That health of body and freedom from acute pain or severe distemper, are absolutely necessary for our deriving pleasure from the greatest abundance of external things, is acknowledged by all. Why is not the necessity of a sound and healthful temper of mind as universally acknowledged? How foolishly do men estimate the requisites to happiness! The body is only the instrument, by means of which the soul receives pleasure from outward things: the health of that is confessed to be necessary for our enjoying them; with what consistence can it be denied that the health of this is at least as necessary? It cannot be denied without contradicting the plainest experience. Who is there that cannot recollect the time, when grief for the death of a beloved friend, regret for the loss of something valuable, anxiety for what he longed to possess, or dread of an impending danger, rendered those things, not insipid only, but disagreeable and loathsome, which, in a different state of mind, would have given him the highest pleasure? Needs there a clearer evidence, that the immediate and principal foundation of enjoyment lies in the inward temper? If the temper of mind fits us for enjoyment, a little will give us great satisfaction: but if our temper be irregular and unhealthy,
it

it will spoil our relish for every object, and render us incapable of extracting any real satisfaction from the greatest affluence.

VICE produces a temper which is very unfavourable to our enjoyment. It destroys the constitution, and breaks the vigour of the soul. It subjects it to the most uneasy feelings and the most painful passions. *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores* *. To a soul in this manner exulcerated and diseased, what enjoyment can arise from the greatest wealth? The perturbations with which vice fills the soul, are more incompatible with enjoyment, than any distemper which can afflict the body. The burning fever does not render us more incapable of tasting pleasure, than insatiable desires and boisterous passions. Agitated by them, the soul boileth, it tosseth, it cannot rest. The agonies of the stone do not more corrode the body, than careful anxiety, fretting peevishness, pining discontent, wasting envy, fell revenge, gnawing remorse, and their kindred agonies, the genuine progeny of vice, corrode the mind. The tortures which they inflict,

force us to nauseate the best things in life. As the ravenous wolf devours the harmless lamb, and converts it into its own substance, they swallow up all the sensations of the soul, and by the mixture even of such as are most pleasant, become the more excruciating. Objects which might afford the sweetest gratification, they render bitterer than gall. When a man's mind is in the power of every vicious passion, all things provoke or deject him, and by heightening his inward misery, increase his incapacity of enjoyment. Is our neighbour fortunate? His prosperity is only fuel thrown into the fire which rages in our souls. Is he unfortunate? His calamities give us joy; but it is a poisoned joy which swells our hearts into greater naughtiness and malignity. Does the world censure us? Conscience is roused; it ratifies the censure; it stings with redoubled force; we are exasperated into fury; we are raised into madness. Does the world commend us? Our heart tells us that we deserve it not; it can give us no sincere pleasure; the feeling of our demerit is strengthened by being contrasted with the opinion of the world; we despise ourselves and abhor ourselves the more. A vicious temper finds occasion of disquiet and disgust in every situation. It deprives a man of that internal serenity and peace which is the sole foundation of happiness. What are the
riches

384. *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVI.

*riches of many wicked, what are all the kingdoms of the earth able to avail the man who is wretched in himself? The fiercest shocks of thunder, winds, and rains cannot produce more dreadful convulsions in the frame of nature, than those into which tumultuous, exorbitant, and jarring passions throw the soul: they ravage all its enjoyments. Vice lets in upon the soul an inundation of torments, which overwhelms it, as the flood of old overwhelmed the earth, when God opened the windows of heaven, and broke up the fountains of the great deep, when the waters prevailed, and increased greatly upon the earth, and killed all flesh that moved upon the earth, and destroyed every living substance that was upon the face of the ground *. All is chaos and disorder; all is uproar and dissatisfaction.*

ON the other hand, virtue establishes a temper in the soul, which fits us for taking pleasure in whatever we possess. It dispells the black clouds which overcast the vicious heart, and intercept the comfort which might arise from outward things: they are scattered by its brightness; they fly away before it as the shadows of the night before the rising sun; they leave the soul open and clear like the sereneest

* Gen. vii. 11. 18. 21. 23.

heavens.

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 385

heavens. Like the sovereign voice of God, whose offspring it is, virtue calms those inward storms which would disturb our peace; it commands the boisterous winds which tear the wicked breast, to cease; it quells the commotion which sin had raised, and made to overflow the wicked like a wide breaking in of waters, and to desolate all their pleasures. As righteous Noah found refuge in the ark from all the spouting cataracts of heaven, and all the gushing fountains of the deep, so the good man, in the serenity which his virtue has established, finds security against the inundation of pains by which the enjoyments of the sinner are swept away. By directing all our passions to their proper objects, and by moderating their impetuosity, virtue strikes at the root of every corrupt lust, and every perturbation fatal to our enjoyment. So far as it prevails, it cures the soul of dissatisfaction and disease. No importunate appetite, no vexatious passion, no sickening remorse, no shuddering dread, no terrifying forebodings of future misery wound the peace of the righteous, or render his possessions unsatisfying. Virtue cherishes the most pleasant affections, contentment, love, cheerfulness, joy, hope; and by their influence it sweetens the ordinary comforts of human life, and keeps the soul in a proper habit for turning all things to the best

advantage. It produces a natural and regular motion of all our powers. Above all, it promotes the active operation of kind and devout affections, which give a soundness and vigour to the mind, more favourable than the greatest flow of bodily health, to an exquisite relish of life and its most common blessings. A temper so delightful as that which virtue establishes, has power enough to overcome the bitterness of sorrow: much abler must it be to improve all our sources of enjoyment, and heighten all the pleasures which naturally issue from them. The temper of the good man fits him for enjoying all the happiness of others, and for tasting satisfaction from the compassion with which he regards their pains. If the world approves him, he has its approbation without abatement; it is confirmed by his own consciousness of worth: and the joy which attends this consciousness, cannot be extinguished by the censure of the ignorant and the malicious; in exerting itself to rise above that censure, it is often brightened and rendered the more exhilarating. A virtuous temper lays the mind open to every satisfaction that comes in its way, prepares it for embracing and enjoying it; and it renders the man so well disposed, so happy in himself, that almost every object throws some satisfaction in his way.

THUS

THUS the temper of the mind is the very foundation of enjoyment: vice spoils this temper; virtue alone can preserve it sound. In the same outward circumstances, therefore, it is plain that the enjoyment of the good man will be far superior. But very little reflection is necessary to convince us that from the same principles it follows undeniably, that even in the most unequal circumstances, even when the wicked are supposed to have the greatest affluence, and the righteous to possess but a little, the latter have much greater enjoyment than the former.

WE are very apt to confound those external things which are only the materials of enjoyment, with enjoyment itself. They are however totally distinct. Every day's experience proves that a man may have many external things in his possession, from which he derives no real enjoyment. Every person is forced to make this observation on some occasions. In the present argument, it is of great importance to attend to the distinction. Riches are valuable only so far as they yield enjoyment. They can therefore be of little value to the wicked man, whose temper renders him so incapable of enjoying them. His soul is diseased; though he had alone the riches of many wealthy men, they could give him little sincere delight. They

may purchase objects the fittest for gratifying the senses : but by these, his senses are not gratified. They may procure for him all the elegances of life : but his inward habit sophisticates the pleasure which they ought to give him. How different is the condition of the good man ? He may possess very little ; but his inward temper secures to him the full enjoyment of whatever he possesseth. A very little is sufficient for the necessities of life ; and if he have only the necessities of life, he can derive from them, more solid pleasure, even of sense, than the wicked derive from all their riches. In reality there is not so great a difference as there seems to be, between the homely pleasure of the poorest cottager and the splendid luxury of the greatest monarch. There is generally more chearfulness and contentment in the cottage than in the palace. This is, at the very lowest, a demonstration that the poor have more real satisfaction and enjoyment, than the rich can easily believe to be compatible with their situation. Nevertheless a few obvious remarks may enable the rich to form a conception of it. It is confessed that by continual use, the most sumptuous enjoyments lose their relish : they become common and familiar ; they are in time despised by those who had at first the quickest taste of them. Custom brings down the enjoyment of the

prince

prince almost to a level with that of the peasant. The rich find their accustomed pleasures so insipid, that they are continually searching for new delights: but the poor remain contented with the same simple fare, and, without a wish for variety, repeat it day after day with undiminished relish; an evidence, that the simplest things give the most real and lasting pleasure. It is felt by the luxurious themselves. Amidst all the variations of entertainment which they introduce, they never banish from their tables bread and water, the necessaries of life, the constant viands of the poor. In these plain productions of nature, they find solider satisfaction than in all the refined inventions of the epicure. When at some times, whetted with hunger, and unable to procure their ordinary delicacies, they have been obliged to take up with homely fare, it gave them a higher gratification than they found at other times in all their dainties. By acknowledging that it did, they unintentionally give their suffrage for the reality of the poor man's enjoyment. You will say, It was owing only to the accidental keenness of their appetite. Granted. But this confirms our argument. They commonly prevent their appetites; and by doing so, they necessarily prevent their pleasure, which arises chiefly from satisfying appetite. The poor man has al-

ways this advantage: he runs not before his appetites; he eats and drinks, only to satisfy them; and from their being satisfied he derives that enjoyment every day, which is so unusual to the luxurious. His senses being neither palled nor vitiated, he uses the coarsest food with more exquisite relish, than the pampered, debauched palate of the voluptuous can admit. But if the sensual pleasures of the poor and the rich be in themselves so nearly upon a level, the poor man who, by being virtuous, possesses inward tranquillity, must have great advantage for enjoyment, above a rich man who is wicked and self-tormented. The pleasure of the former is pure; all the pleasures of the latter are wofully sophisticated. *Better is a dry morsel, and quietness of spirit therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with the inward trouble* * which vice produces. If the righteous man have only the necessaries of life, they are better than all the treasures of the wicked. But there are very few who have not more than the necessaries of life. A little will procure a share of conveniencies and its comforts, sufficient to satisfy the moderate and well-regulated appetites of the virtuous man. Enough for this, is as much as his heart desires. It is truly as much as the wealthiest can have. Whatever

* Prov. xvii. 1. xv. 16.

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 391

a man possesses, more than he can use to some good purpose, is nothing to him, contributes nothing to his happiness, yields him no recompence for the trouble which it costs him to take care of it. This is so unquestionably true, that the general voice of mankind pronounces the middle state of life happier than the highest.

INSATIABLE desires, in common with every irregular and faulty passion, obstruct our enjoyment of outward things by spoiling the inward temper: they likewise obstruct in it a way peculiar to themselves. It is not the less true for being trite, That our natural wants are few and easily supplied, but that no abundance can supply the extravagance and multitude of artificial wants which arise in the ungoverned mind. *He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver*, let him have ever so much, *nor he that loveth abundance, with increase* *, be it ever so great. *In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits* †. It holds not of riches only, but of every external object of desire. Now the lawless imagination of the vicious man, by painting the objects of desire in false colours, makes them to appear much more valuable than they are:

* Eccles. v. 10.

† Job. xx. 22.

his desire gathers strength proportioned to their fancied value: and the constant habit of indulging it raises it to a degree of vehemence far exceeding even his own opinion of the value of its objects. No enjoyment of these objects can satisfy its craving, or quench its ardour. It is *the fire that saith not, It is enough* *. Exorbitant desire is a dropsy of the soul: it parches it with a thirst which, far from being allayed, is inflamed by every draught; it cannot possibly be satisfied; the more studiously it is indulged, the more importunately it cries, Give, give. Incapable of gratification from its own objects, it likewise renders a man unfit for deriving gratification from other objects. The man who is eagerly engrossed by one darling pursuit, finds every pleasure that is foreign to it, tasteless at least, if not disgusting. As in deformed bodies, the distorted member, itself a deformity and incumbrance, exhausts the nourishment of the other members, rendering the whole a puny skeleton; so overgrown appetites and passions, themselves insatiable, deprive all our other powers of their enjoyment, and rob the soul of its vigour, its satisfaction, and its happiness. All the riches which a wicked man can possess, all the materials of enjoyment which

* Prov. xxx. 26.

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 393

they can enable him to accumulate, instead of filling his exorbitant desires, render them more exorbitant, increase the distortion of his soul, and put satisfaction the farther beyond his reach. The greater the abundance which he possesses, the more frequent the gratifications which his situation affords to his desires, the more incapable he is of real enjoyment. A pitiable, wretched state! But a state into which the want of self-government necessarily plunges men! You may every day observe it realized in the restlessness of the rich and the voluptuous, perpetually running from place to place, and from entertainment to entertainment; weary of the present; impatient for the future; but sick of it also, the moment they have begun to taste it. Far different is the state of the virtuous man. It is the very province of virtue to reduce all our desires within their natural limits. It moderates their strength, lessens their number, fixes their just balance: none consumes the food of the rest; and therefore a very little satisfies them all. As in a healthful body the nourishment distributed regularly to all the members, renders the whole well-proportioned, vigorous, and agile; so in the virtuous soul, the proper gratification being allowed to every natural passion, it contributes its part to enjoyment and happiness.

ALL

394 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVI.

ALL the kinds of vice obstruct enjoyment in the ways that have been mentioned : every vice distempers the soul, and spoils its constitution ; many vices consist wholly in the exorbitance of desire, and every vice contributes to the exorbitance of our desires by destroying their just proportion : but there are particular vices which produce likewise other effects no less fatal to real enjoyment. You readily think of avarice : it forbids the application of riches to any of the necessary ends of life ; it proscribes every possible use of wealth ; the more a covetous man has, the more anxious his trouble in preserving it, the more excruciating his dread of losing it, the more parching and unquenchable his thirst for greater riches. But wonder not, when you hear intemperance mentioned along with it. Intemperance ! it is the very organ of sensual pleasure ; pleasure is its direct aim and end ; if any of the vices can improve our enjoyment of outward things, it must be intemperance. Yet it truly gives a less share even of the pleasures of sense, than sobriety and temperance. The habit of excess deadens the sense, renders it so callous and unfeeling, that the pleasure of indulging it is reduced to little more than a cessation of the uneasiness of importunate desire. But the moderation which temperance prescribes, preserves the senses quick

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 395

quick and tender, and susceptible of all the pleasures which objects are fit to give.

FROM these observations it appears, that a little can yield to the virtuous more genuine pleasure even of sense, than the greatest riches can yield to the wicked. But the virtuous have still greater advantages. From affluence, the wicked derive only sensual pleasure: from a competence, from a very little, the good man derives far nobler joys. Sensual pleasure is of the most abject kind. Alone it cannot render life so much as tolerable. Despicable is the life which is filled up with a succession of eating, drinking, sleeping. Contemptible is the man who spends all his days in the most refined luxury, in the most artfully varied pleasures, but never performs a generous, friendly, humane, or charitable deed. A single moment of serious reflection would pierce his heart with a pungent feeling of his own meanness and insignificance. The total absence of reflection cannot prevent his feeling very often that he is unsatisfied and wretched, or his groaning inwardly under the pressure of languor and satiety. He cannot be constantly employed in gratifying his senses: no agreeable reflection, no cheering self-approbation can irradiate his intervals of enjoyment: they are painfully wasted in overwhelming

396 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVI.

whelming surfeit, listless yawning, or fretful impatience for a new engagement. The human soul has faculties which demand sublimer objects. It may become so degenerate as never to aspire to them : but the lowest degeneracy cannot extinguish a distressing sensation of inanity and dissatisfaction in the want of them. While the wicked are in many ways rendered incapable of a full relish of the very enjoyment which they professedly pursue, they pine under a tormenting sense of the want of higher enjoyments, which the corruption of their souls smothers every thought of pursuing. But virtue teaches the true use of the worldly mammon. From earthly pelf, it enables the good man to extract the sublimest joy. Besides purer pleasures of sense than any of which the wicked are susceptible, he enjoys delights with which these are not worthy to be compared, the exquisite delights of benevolence and of piety.

A GOOD man sheweth favour and lendeth ; he is gracious and full of compassion*. He employs his substance in beneficence. He obtains from it all the joys which attend the exercise of friendship, generosity, charity, and all the joys which spring from reflection on a god-like

* Psal. cxii. 4, 5.

temper :

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 397

temper ; joys which resemble the happiness of heaven, the raptures of angels, the blessedness of God. *It is more blessed to give than to receive*†, said he who could fairly estimate every sentiment of the human heart. Its dignity, its beauty, and its blessedness, Job attests from his own experience. *When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me ; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me ; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame ; I was a father to the poor. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel : after my words they spake not again, and my speech dropped upon them : and they waited for me, as for the rain ; and they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain. I chose out their way, and sat chief and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners**. This good man was overwhelmed

† Acts xx. 35.

* Job xxix. 21---25.

with

398 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVI.

with poverty and disease; all the means of beneficence were taken from him; he was abused by those whom he had fed; his glory was turned into contempt: he felt the reverse with all the sensibility of honest indignation; *but now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. And now I am their song, yea, I am their by-word: they abhor me, they flee from me, and spare not to spit in my face* *. But even in this depth of complicated distress, he was not destitute of comfort; the remembrance of his beneficence upheld him, and inspired a cheering confidence: *if I have with-held the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father;) if I have seen any perish for want of cloathing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lift up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone* †. If you have a dear brother or a beloved son, is not this the character which

* Job xxx. 1. 9, 10.

† Chap. xxxi. 16--22.

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 399

you would wish him to sustain? In possessing it, would you not reckon him excellent and happy? Compared with the man who employs his substance in such offices of beneficence, how pitiful, how wretched does he appear who expends it in the most splendid gratifications of sense? Wealth in the hands of benevolence, gives pleasure to thousands; and all the pleasure which they all receive, is returned, greatly refined and exalted, into the soul that gave it. A little furnishes not the means of doing all the *liberal things* which *the liberal deviseth* †; but he willingly does all the good he can: and *if there be first a willing mind*, few are so destitute as not to be able to confer some happiness; and what a man confers is not only *accepted* by God, but also approved and inwardly enjoyed by himself, *according to what he hath, not according to that he hath not* *. The widow's *two mites* bestowed by fervent charity, is more than all the gifts which the rich grudgingly or ostentatiously give *of their abundance* †.

THE good man considers all that he has, however little it be, as bestowed on him by God. The consideration gives a flavour to his pleasures, of which the wicked can form no

† If. xxxii. 8.

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

† Luke xxi. 1--4.

conception. Whatever he possesses, he reckons it not little: it is a divine gift; it derives value from the hand that gave it; it is a mark of the notice of the Most High. But the wicked never think from whom their abundance comes: amidst their revellings they dishonour the God by whose bounty their tables are supplied. Regardless of his operation in enriching them, they taste only the shell of their worldly goods, they do not penetrate to the kernel. They taste none of the exalted pleasures which spring from divine love, from fervent gratitude, from chearful trust in an unerring and gracious Providence, from gladdening consciousness of its continual protection. These pleasures, the poorest good man derives from his scanty pittance; in every one of his comforts, he enjoys God. He shares in David's raptures; *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; the horn of my salvation, and my high tower* *. *Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands* †. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice* ‡. *The Lord is the portion of mine*

* Psal. xviii. 1. † Psal. xcii. 4. ‡ Psal. lxxiii. 5, 7. †

SERM. XVI. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 401

inheritance, and of my cup, thou maintainest my lot ||. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life §.

THUS, by examining the opposite effects of vice and virtue on the temper of the mind, which is the necessary foundation even of sensual enjoyment; and in particular, on the government of our appetites and passions, in satisfying which that enjoyment consists; and by pointing out the sublime and elevated pleasures which goodness reaps from the right use of worldly things; it has been evinced that a little wealth gives the virtuous man purer and greater enjoyment than treasures can yield to the wicked. That it gives him likewise more durable enjoyment, shall be proved hereafter. Without virtue, what is life? A dreary waste, a barren desert. What is all that the world can bestow, but vanity, pain, and bitterness? But to the virtuous, poverty is wealth. Where virtue is not, dissatisfaction and wretchedness prevail. Where virtue dwells, there is sincere pleasure and true enjoyment. Behold the blasting, poisonous influence of vice: let your regard to interest, to present interest, urge you to abandon it. Behold the power of virtue to improve, to refine every gratification: let self-love determine you to practise it.

|| Psal. xvi. 5. § Psal. xxiii. 6.

C c

S E R M O N

SERMON XVI. the enjoyment of eternal Good.

Let II. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

Thus, by examining the opposite effects of vice and virtue on the temper of the mind, which is the necessary foundation even of sensual enjoyment; and in particular, on the government of our appetites and passions, in the satisfying which that enjoyment consists; and by pointing out the sublime and elevated pleasures which goodness reaps from the right use of worldly things; it has been evinced that a little wealth gives the virtuous man more and greater enjoyment than treasures can yield to the wicked. That it gives him likewise more durable enjoyment, shall be proved hereafter. Without virtue, what is life? A dreary waste, a barren desert. What is all that the world can bestow, but vanity, pain, and bitterness? But to the virtuous, poverty is wealth. Where virtue is not, dissatisfaction and wretchedness prevail. Where virtue dwells, there is sincere pleasure and true enjoyment. Behold the pleasing, poisonous influence of vice: let your regard to interest, to present interest, urge you to abandon it. Behold the power of virtue to improve, to refine every gratification: let self-love determine you to practise it.

S E R M O N XVII.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE VIRTUOUS FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF EXTERNAL GOOD.

PSALM xxxvii. 16.

*A little that a righteous man hath, is better than
the riches of many wicked.*

THAT it is better, because it gives greater, purer, and more solid enjoyment, has been already evinced. That it is likewise better, because it gives more *durable* enjoyment, shall be next evinced.

THE practice of virtue preserves and improves the capacity of enjoyment; the practice of wickedness impairs it. As every vice tends to unfit us for the true enjoyment of outward things, the greater and the more numerous our vices are, our enjoyment must be the less. They may become so many and so great as to render the amplest possessions perfectly insipid. In wicked men, vicious habits never fail to

make a rapid progress. As bodily distemper, from small beginnings, increases till it prove mortal, as one disease neglected is the cause of many others; so the vices of the depraved heart daily acquire new strength by indulgence; they propagate many more; they infect the temper and disorder the constitution with a growing multitude of tormenting passions; they root guilt, remorse, and terror deeper in the soul. When the government of the passions is neglected, when the authority of conscience is slighted, when a sacred regard to the will of God is cast away, every temptation will precipitate a man into new sins, and every new sin will be the source of many griefs. However weak, however few his sinful habits be at first, however little they disturb his enjoyment, they will increase, and in the end destroy it. Whatever good qualities he once possessed, they will be gradually choaked by his spreading vices; they will wither and decay; his capacity of enjoyment will be blasted in the same proportion. The man who never thinks of rectifying the depravities of his temper, but goes on to indulge them without controul, must at last become abandoned, and insusceptible of genuine satisfaction. The enjoyment of the good man is in every respect the reverse. Like his practice, *it is as the shining light, that shineth more and more*

more unto the perfect day *. His virtue does not merely secure the continuance of that relish which he has for true pleasure; it improves his relish in proportion as itself is, by careful practice, strengthened and refined. All the enemies of his enjoyment will be subdued by degrees; all inordinate passions will be mortified, all corrupt dispositions extirpated, all excessive desires curbed; all the fountains of inward pain will be dried up; his peace of mind will be established; all his good principles will be improved. By daily progress in holiness, he will be more and more possessed of that heavenly serenity of soul, which, by giving him the full enjoyment of himself, prepares him for deriving high and solid satisfaction from every agreeable circumstance in his worldly condition.

THE health of the body, as well as the temper of the mind, is requisite for our finding pleasure in outward things. There are many vices which render our enjoyment transitory by breaking the health of the body. *Envy*, says Solomon, *is the rottenness of the bones* †. Envy, discontent, peevishness, malice, pride, emaciate and wear out the body. Rage and fury inflame all its humours. Sloth

* Prov. iv. 18.

† Prov. xiv. 30.

and indolence make them to stagnate in languor and infirmity. Intemperance fills every member with torturing disease. Enjoyment hastens to a speedy period. The opposite virtues are friendly to health. *A sound heart is the life of the flesh* † : and it is only inward rectitude that can bestow it. By determined temperance, by persevering self-government, by the serene tranquillity of conscious virtue, the disorders incident to very delicate constitutions have often been prevented from giving any considerable interruption to the enjoyment of a very long life.

It is not only by preserving the capacity of enjoyment that virtue prolongs our satisfaction; it is not only by impairing this capacity that vice hastens its extinction: virtue likewise gives a greater probability than vice, for the continuance of those outward things which are the materials and means of enjoyment. It must be confessed that worldly goods are of a fleeting and precarious nature: *riches are not for ever, nor doth the crown endure to every generation* *. Prosperity, like a meteor, often vanishes in an instant; there is no infallible method of preserving it in continual splendour. But what security there can be for its continu-

† Prov. xiv. 30.

• Chap. xxvii. 24.

and vice gives, and of all things, vice tends
most directly to extinguish it. *to snuff out the
affection of the soul of the sinner*
But the drunkard and the glutton shall come to po-
verty. Intemperance, luxury, and the other
sensual vices, consume the substance, like the
locusts which eat every herb which groweth out
of the field: a fire devoureth before them, and
behind them a flame burneth. How much
they can consume, would be incredible, if ex-
perience had not often shewn that the amplest
fortune is quickly exhausted in supporting
them. At the same time, a course of unlaw-
ful pleasure enfeebles the soul, enervates the
body, sinks both into sloth and effeminacy,
and renders a man incapable of either sustain-
ing or repairing his broken fortune. *to be
destroyed* So shall
thy poverty come swift as one that is a wall,
and thy want irresistible as an armed man. *to be
destroyed* But voluptuousness, the building decayeth, and
through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth
through. The pampered son of pleasure no
longer finds the means of supplying his mul-
tiplied necessities, he tumbles down into pe-
nury: he is friendless, and contemptible,
unassisted, and pitied by all, and often most by
those who have shared in his riots, or become
rich by his spoils. The temperate has no ex-

* Prov. xxiii. 21. † Exod. x. 5. Joel ii. 3. ‡ Prov. vi. 21.
|| Eccl. x. 18.

408 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVII.

pensive lusts to make provision for. He wastes not the means of enjoyment. If he has but a little, he bids fair to possess it long. His moderation preserves his mind vigorous, and his body hardy: he is capable of exertion, by which he may improve his condition, and render his little more.

AGAIN, integrity, honesty, equity gain a man the confidence of the world; and secure to him many advantages for prosperity, which naturally arise from that confidence. All good men rejoice in his prosperity: none but the very worst will endeavour to prevent or to blast his success. He fears no prosecution for invaded rights, no demand of expensive reparation for wrongs that he has done. If, in contradiction to the direct tendency of invariable justice, poverty should happen to come upon him, he is secure from insult, he has the sympathy of all, and the friendship of the good, and he shall be delivered from want in the evil day. So true in every sense is Solomon's maxim, *he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely. But he that perceiveth his ways, shall be known* *. His real character cannot remain for ever undiscovered. Every dishonest word and action requires new falsehood

* Prov. x. 9.

and

and

and dishonesty to conceal it. The longer he goes on, the more numerous are the villainies which he must find the means of disguising, and the greater is the difficulty of finding these means. Every moment he is surrounded by manifold hazards of detection; and detection is necessarily fatal to his interest. He has forfeited the confidence of every heart; he lives the object of general distrust; in all his actions artifice is suspected; the injured demand their own; the chastisement of public justice marks him with infamy; perhaps he becomes a helpless, despised beggar; or if he becomes not a beggar, he is notwithstanding abject, abhorred, excluded from all the opportunities of creditable enjoyment. *He that hasteth to be rich, considereth not that by his haste poverty shall come upon him*. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them, because they refuse to do judgment†.*

But are there not some vices which tend directly to preserve the materials of enjoyment, and some virtues which tend directly to dissipate them? Does not avarice, for example, labour to secure and increase riches? It does. But what is the use of riches to the miser? Of what enjoyment does he render them the

* Prov. xxviii. 22.

† Chap. xxi. 7.

means! In his possession, they are only unemployed, unprofitable trash. They answer no other end but to minister occasions of anxiety and fretfulness. Do not generosity, hospitality, charity, beneficence, exhaust a man's substance and expose him to penury? This is the tendency of prodigality: but prodigality is only an awkward mimicry of these amiable virtues. Their most liberal exertions are regulated by prudence. *A good man sheweth favour and lendeth, but he will guide his affairs with discretion*.* He that thus giveth unto the poor shall not lack†. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but cometh to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself‡. He dispenses part of his substance; but it is to purchase an ample recompence of inward joy. By doing all that his ability permits, he secures to himself the good will and the good offices of mankind: numbers are indissolubly engaged to him by gratitude; and many more by admiration of the benevolence of his heart. He shall not fail to receive the means of comfort from others, if he have them not of his own. He is the good man for whom the apostle supposes that peradventure some would even dare to die||.

* Ps. cxii. 5. † Prov. xxviii. 27. ‡ Chap. xi. 24, 25. || Rôm. v. 7.

THUS

SERM. XVII. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 411

THU'S, from the obvious, essential tendencies of virtue and vice, we may conclude that the righteous has a much higher probability for the durable enjoyment of his possessions, however small, than the wicked has for the continuance of his wealth.—But the probability is greatly strengthened when we take into the account, the providence of God who ruleth over all. Our own conduct is far from being the only cause of our good or ill success. Many things over which we have no power, necessarily affect our worldly situation. These are all in the hand of God. He is *the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness** and abhorreth all iniquity: and he will over-rule them so as to pull down the wicked, except when his prosperity promotes the general good; and to establish the righteous, except when his prosperity is inconsistent with his own greater happiness. Signal examples have occurred in every age, of God's special providence assisting the natural tendencies of things, rendering the miserable consequences of vice more certain and more dreadful, and the advantages of virtue greater, than the ordinary course of things gave reason for expecting. The world has often seen the weakness of the righteous, aided by the plain energy of omni-

* Psal. xi. 7.

potence,

412 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVII.

potence, baffle the power of man, and surmount the greatest difficulties. It has seen the simplicity of the righteous, guided by the divine wisdom, elude all the cunning of his enemies, and escape from the most imminent dangers. It has seen the good man just sinking into an abyfs of adversity, when lo! he has been suddenly upheld by the most unlikely means. It has seen the humble and the modest, sought for in the most sequestered recesses of obscurity, that he might be exalted to honour and *set with the princes of his people* *. It has seen the treasures of the munificent encrease, as if they had been replenished by a miracle. It has seen the good man raised to the summit of prosperity, by those very circumstances which seemed naturally fit for overwhelming him with ruin. *The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good* †. On the other hand, we have sometimes seen the rapacious extortioner, and the griping miser, reduced to a bit of bread. We have often seen the aspiring employ in vain all the profligate arts which ambition dictated. We have seen the wicked seated securely, as we thought, on the pinnacle of prosperity; and in an instant, an hand which our eye

* Psal. cxiii. 3.

† Psal. xxxiv. 10.

SERM. XVII. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 413

could not perceive, has tumbled him down. He teemed with flattering schemes for adding thousands to his fortune; the moment was come for carrying them into execution; when, behold, the Lord blasts them with the breath of his mouth, and scatters them as dust is scattered by the wind. His closest frauds are detected; his most intricate plots are defeated; he is *snared in the work of his own hands* *, and *taken in his own craftiness* †. *Terrors take hold of him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night; the east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and a storm hurleth him out of his place* ‡. *Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the day; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver* ||. The powerful influence of divine providence, on the condition both of the righteous and the wicked, is beautifully described in many passages of scripture, particularly in the psalm from which my text is taken. This influence, especially when added to the natural tendencies of virtue and vice, renders it in the highest degree probable, that the righteous shall have more durable possession of the means of enjoyment, than the wicked,

* Psal. ix. 16. † Job v. 13. ‡ Chap. xxvii. 20, 21. || Ver. 26, 27.

BUT

414 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVII

BUT suppose them both deprived of them. How different are their conditions?—The wicked man never had a relish for any other pleasures, than such as his wealth could purchase; his wealth is gone; and all these pleasures have fled along with it. Winter has overtaken him; his summer friends desert him; the pinching cold has killed their love; they laugh at his calamity. His pampered appetites require immense supplies; but he can give them none: they turn their rage against himself, and torture him. In the most flourishing state he was often restless and unsatisfied; he pined away during the intervals of his pleasures: but now he has a perpetual interval; nothing remains that can divert his misery for an hour. The whole world is become a parched wilderness; it contains not a single spring of comfort. Whence can he look for comfort? From the present? It is all horror and desolation. From the future? There he espies more dreadful misery awaiting him. From the past? That is the fatal cause of all that he feels, and of all that he fears. His dissatisfaction admits no intermission or relief, except he fly to the salutary medicine of bitter repentance, till death remove him from it, into more insufferable misery.

BUT suppose the righteous man reduced to the extremest poverty. God sometimes permits

mits fit for wise ends. Yet his condition is far from being wretched. God will raise up friends to him; they who love his virtue, will rejoice to supply his wants. His desires are so moderate, that what would be indigence to the wicked, is to him a competence. The necessities of life will be sufficient to render his condition more eligible than the affluence of the wicked. The same temper which prepares him for deriving the highest enjoyment from earthly things, when he has them, supports and comforts him in the want of them, and in a great measure supplies their place. To whatever other pains the good man may be subject, he is exempt from the racking pain of guilt; to this pain, the wicked man is constantly obnoxious, and he cannot be at all times free from every other. The good man may be destitute of other pleasures; but of the supreme pleasure of a good conscience, no situation can deprive him: of this, the wicked man is incapable, and it is not possible that he should enjoy all other pleasures; for they are incompatible in their nature, and the depravity of his soul renders them unsatisfying shadows and illusions. To the good man, a mean opinion of this world, and resignation to the providence of God, render the want of earthly things easily supportable. The consciousness that he received his blessings with gratitude, and that he

416 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVII.

employed them in virtuous offices, sustains him in adversity, cheers him in the midst of tribulations, assures him *that all things work together for good* * to him. In the deepest penury, the good man does not so properly lose, as vary his pleasures: when one source of enjoyment is dried up, he draws it from another fountain; when the desert denies a spring of water, he finds it gushing from the rock. If he should even die by famine, he *dies in the Lord*, and is *blessed*; his *works follow him* †: every act of beneficence or compassion which his small possessions ever put it in his power to perform, shall be remembered by his Saviour at the day of judgment; *a cup of cold water given on a worthy motive, shall in no wise lose its reward* ‡; it shall be recompensed with everlasting joys. Judge ye then, whether the poor of this world may not be truly rich. If they be but virtuous, they have the most precious treasures: self-enjoyment is their lot, heaven is their inheritance, God is their portion.

In respect of the *duration* therefore, as well as the *greatness*, of his enjoyment, *a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.*

* Rom. viii. 28.

† Rev. xiv. 13.

‡ Mat. x. 42.

BUT

BUT against all that has been said, a strong objection seems to arise from experience: the wicked, it may be urged, have actually a greater, and the righteous a less degree of enjoyment than we have all along asserted. We admit the fact; if the wicked were so totally destitute of enjoyment as we have represented them to be, their life would be insupportable: but we maintain, that, when this fact is examined, instead of weakening our argument, it will confirm it. We have hitherto supposed the character to be purely virtuous, or purely vicious, that by viewing virtue and vice separately, we might the better discover the genuine tendency of both: but every human character is mixed, composed of some virtues and some vices; and the actual enjoyment of every human creature is affected by each of the ingredients which enter into the composition.

ON the one hand, That good men have not in fact all the enjoyment which virtue naturally tends to produce, is owing wholly to vice, and to the infirmities which vice has brought upon their souls. From vice still lurking in their hearts, it proceeds that the best men are sometimes preyed upon by those painful passions which eat out the sweetness of the most prosperous condition. From vice imperfectly subdued, it proceeds that their de-

fires are at times immoderate, and plunge them into dissatisfaction amidst real abundance. From the consciousness of vice which they have committed, and of which they are not certain that they have yet obtained forgiveness, it proceeds that their enjoyment is sometimes overcast by remorse, and doubt, and fear. If they taste not all the joys of beneficence, it must be ascribed to the imperfection of their kind affections, or to vicious passions which counteract their exercise, preventing their doing all the good that they have it in their power to do. If they do not constantly delight themselves in the God of their mercies, it is because the weakness of their piety or the influence of sensible things hinders them from preserving a continual sense of him as the giver of all good. If they waste their means of enjoyment by frivolous expence or injudicious show, or even profuse liberality, it is owing to some weakness or imprudence which, though compatible with a character virtuous upon the whole, is not totally innocent. If they sink under the loss of their possessions, the cause will be found in some remaining undue attachment to the comforts of easy circumstances, or to supposed rank in life, which completer virtue would teach them to despise, and to sacrifice without a sigh to the will of God. In every case, the enjoyment of the virtuous falls short of what

we have described, only because their virtues are imperfect, and not altogether refined from the alloy of vice. Being occasioned by this, its falling short is so far from being an objection against the tendency of virtue to secure to us the full enjoyment of outward things, that it turns out to be a new and irrefragable demonstration of the malignant nature of vice. Its influence is so subtle and so pernicious, that a small mixture of it sophisticates the joys of the most exalted virtue.

ON the other hand, To what is it owing, that the wicked have any enjoyment in all that they possess? Not to their wickedness: its real tendency is precisely such as has been described: but to this, that the very worst of men have some good qualities, some imperfect degrees of virtue. By preserving some measure of health and soundness in their souls, these give them some capacity of enjoyment. These set some bounds to their appetites and passions, and prevent their desires from becoming absolutely insatiable. From reflection upon these, they derive some kind of self-approbation and hearts-ease. Their partial goodness dilutes the poison of their many vices; it produces both mitigation and intermission of their wretchedness; but it cannot prevent their being often inwardly tormented when the world perceives

it not; it cannot prevent their pleasures from being secretly tainted with the bitterness of corrupt affections and remorse. That they are capable of relishing even the pleasures of sense, they owe to their virtues; that their pleasures are any-wise impaired, they owe wholly to their vices. Their virtues, slender as they are, gain them admission likewise to nobler pleasures. Very few are so depraved, as to exercise no compassion, humanity, or benevolence. Many who cannot be reckoned truly virtuous, perform acts of generosity or mercy, from which they derive great satisfaction. They cloath their very luxury and profusion with the garb of social virtue, and in this disguise regard them with complacency. Kind affections are so highly beatific, that, even when they are much debased, they diffuse serenity upon the soul. But their being debased renders it impossible that the pleasure communicated by them to the wicked, who exercise them but instinctively and casually, can ever rise to an equality with the pure and constant joy of which the uniform exertion of them, from principle, from conscience, from love of goodness, is productive to the sincerely virtuous. In the wicked, these amiable affections, being imperfectly formed, and mixed with other dispositions odious and disgusting in their nature, his character is heterogeneous and monstrous,

SERM. XVII. *the Enjoyment of external Good.* 421

unfit for yielding him, upon reflection, that full satisfaction and delight, by which the consciousness of consistent and growing virtue attunes the good man's soul to every pleasing sentiment. Whatever enjoyment, then, the wicked actually have, it proves not that vice can ever become conducive to enjoyment; it proves only the power of virtue to be so great, that the lowest degree, the incompletest kind of it, can in some measure counteract the tendency of vice to plunge the corrupt and the guilty into perfect misery.

THUS, in every light in which it can be viewed, the Psalmist's maxim, *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked*, however paradoxical it may seem at first hearing, approves itself as a principle of most unquestionable certainty. A little gives the good man purer pleasures of sense, fuller satisfaction, and sublimer joys, than the depravity of the wicked permits them to derive from the amplest possessions. The good man's relish for enjoyment improves continually; the sinner's is speedily impaired: the conduct of the former is conducive to the preservation of his possessions; the conduct of the latter in many ways endangers the loss of them: in behalf of the former, the divine Providence is engaged; but *the face of the Lord*

is against * the latter; when riches are once lost, the recollection of them can give the wicked no pleasure, it wounds his soul with unavailing regret and anguish; but if the good man's possessions should forsake him, reflection on the use to which he put them, comforts him in the day of famine, and enlivens his hope of incorruptible treasures in heaven. Every abatement to which the good man's enjoyment is liable in this mixed state, is to be placed to the account of vice; and whatever degree of enjoyment, the world can convey to the wicked, is to be ascribed to their imperfect virtues.

IF these things be so, need we be surprized that so few are really happy? Is it not rather surprizing that so many find life tolerable? The generality mistake the place of happiness. They seek it only in external goods; these they pursue with inextinguishable ardour and indefatigable diligence; but they neglect that inward temper of virtue, which alone can give them the power of bestowing any happiness. If they labour to amass the materials of enjoyment, yet by their vicious practice, they labour still more assiduously to render themselves incapable of drawing sincere enjoyment from

* Psal. xxxiv. 16,

these

these materials. When they feel themselves unsatisfied with what they have, they think not that it ought to be imputed to any other cause, but that they have no more. They fret themselves for the want of what they imagine would fulfil their wishes and secure their satisfaction; and to the *vanity* which is inseparable from sublunary things, they foolishly superadd that *vexation of spirit* which they have it in their own power to avoid. They set themselves to acquire what may supply the deficiency in their lot; but when they have acquired it, they find the same deficiency still remaining in their enjoyment. They study in vain to gratify their desires by satiating them; they never attempt to render them susceptible of gratification, by governing them. When inward uneasiness destroys their relish, they have recourse only to palliatives which, by giving a momentary relief, increase the uneasiness, or to provocatives which, by irritating the sense, wear out its feeling: they never think of removing the cause, of curing the vice from which their uneasiness ultimately proceeds. The generality look for happiness from without; therefore they must miss it: it can be found only within; it depends on the temper of the heart. The man must fail of being nourished, who seeks his nourishment, not in bread, but in a stone, or in a serpent.

424 *Advantages of the Virtuous for* SERM. XVII.

AGAIN, Need we be concerned that outward things are distributed so promiscuously, or so unequally? It is by no means a necessary consequence, that enjoyment and uneasiness, happiness and misery, are likewise distributed promiscuously or unequally. It is certain that these are far from being in exact proportion to men's worldly conditions. *A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth* *. It may be out of your power to become rich or great; the order of nature which God has ordained, puts it out of the power of the generality: but his ordination is not, on that account, unrighteous or severe. It is sufficient for justifying his appointment, it ought to reconcile each of you to his own condition, that God has placed real enjoyment within the reach of every man. It is in the power of every man, by the assistance of God's grace, to cultivate a virtuous and holy temper: and this is infinitely more important to his enjoyment, than the gaudiest distinctions of external state. Without this, nothing external can make him happy; with this, a very little may. The man who is possessed of this, can never have reason to envy the most prosperous among the wicked.

* Luke xii, 15,

IN fine, Would we be truly happy? Let us be virtuous. It is not more our duty, than it is our interest. Conscience cannot require it with greater earnestness, than self-love enforces it. Self-love directed by just views of our present happiness, though it should look no farther, would urge us to fulfil the obligations of virtue and religion, at least in all ordinary situations. Inward worth not only gives the sublimest pleasures peculiar to itself, but establishes a temper which prepares us for the completest enjoyment of all other things. By vice the best things are converted into poison; but things very disagreeable in themselves are rendered pleasant by religion. It enables the poor to find satisfaction in the smallest pittance. What pleasures, then, what inexhaustible joys, would it not enable the rich and the great to collect from their plentiful possessions? By neglecting to excell in goodness, how cruelly do they rob their own souls? *Be wise now therefore, O ye princes of earth; be instructed, ye meanest of the people: hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world; both low and high, rich and poor together **: To all of you the path of happiness is the very same; *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways; for thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands; happy*

* Psal. ii. 10. xlix. 1, 2.

426 *Advantages of the Virtuous, &c.* SERM. XVII.

*shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee †.
Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righte-
ousness: and all that is agreeable, all that is
truly good, in the things of this world, shall be
added unto you †.*

• Psal. cxxviii. 1, 2.

† Mat. vi. 33.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVIII.

THE POWER OF VIRTUOUS RESOLUTIONS.

PSALM cxix. 106.

*I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I
will keep thy righteous judgments.*

SOLEMN resolutions and vows have always been considered as powerful means of enabling men to abstain from vice and to practise virtue. Philosophers, as well as divines, have acknowledged their influence, and recommended it to their disciples, to form them with care. False religions, as well as the true religion, enjoin them, in order to determine their votaries to steadiness in those practices which they inculcate upon them.

In common life, experience shews that an explicit, determined resolution has often very great power. In religion, experience seems rather to proclaim that the best resolutions are generally weak and ineffectual: the one hour men

men resolve to practise holiness; and the next hour they forsake it, as if they had never intended to practise it. We cannot, however, fairly conclude from this inconstancy, that it is of no avail to form virtuous resolutions. In whatever degree the frailty of human nature and the temptations of the world may render them in fact abortive; it is evident from their natural tendency, that they are among the best means of reformation from sin, and of confirmation and improvement in holiness. The text will naturally lead us to unfold their tendency, and to evince their power. *I have sworn, says David, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* He had already agreed to keep them; he had strengthened his resolution by interposing an oath, a solemn vow: he would not have formed it with so great care and solemnity if he had not been convinced that it would contribute much to regulate his conduct; and the manner of his reflecting upon it shows a deep sense of the obligation which it laid him under to fulfil. In this discourse, I shall examine the nature of that influence which virtuous resolutions have in fixing our temper and regulating our practice; and afterwards deduce some practical improvement from the subject.

WHAT then is the nature of that influence and power which may justly be ascribed to virtuous
reso-

resolutions? Mistake concerning it, is one of the principal causes of the inefficacy of such resolutions. We expect from them, effects which they cannot possibly produce; and therefore miss the fruits which might be reaped from the due improvement of them. A resolution, even the firmest and the strongest, cannot directly or immediately extirpate vice and implant holiness. It is an internal act of goodness; the repetition of it will form a correspondent habit; but the only habit correspondent to it, is the habit of resolving well. Virtuous resolutions, frequently renewed with sincerity, will accustom us to renew them with less reluctance, with greater ease and readiness. But they cannot, by their immediate operation, without other means, cleanse the heart in an instant from vicious habits and sinful inclinations, or rear a virtuous temper. A resolution, however solemn, is only a determination of the will. But God has not put our dispositions and our habits so absolutely in our power, that we can form or destroy them by merely willing it. To become pure and virtuous is a far more arduous task. God has appointed it to be our exercise, our work, our labour throughout this state of trial. He has ordained that it should not be accomplished without constant exertion, diligence, and care. His grace could doubtless transform the soul,
better in

in a moment, from wickedness to perfect purity: but he has adapted the established methods of his grace to the principles of the human constitution; enabling even those to whom it is most liberally communicated, to mortify their depraved affections and to acquire the virtues of the Christian temper, only by slow advances and imperceptible steps, in consequence of continual circumspection, unremitting activity in well-doing, and frequent and fervent prayer. As in the natural world, the plant is raised to maturity only by a regular process of vegetation, in consequence of skilful culture and the nourishing dews of heaven; so in the spiritual world, the seeds of virtue can be ripened into a solid temper only by a continued course of virtuous practice, animated by the power of divine grace. It is by exciting us to such practice, by prompting us to a series of good actions, that resolutions contribute to our improvement: and because they excite and prompt us in many ways, they are powerful instruments of our improvement.

I. A RESOLUTION of virtue lays us under an *obligation* to be virtuous. In the language of scripture, it *binds the soul with a bond* *. A resolution to do any thing, though

* Num. xxx. 2.

formed

formed with perfect secrecy, produces an obligation to do it, without fulfilling which we cannot thoroughly approve ourselves. If we have rashly resolved to do what it is not fit to do, we are dissatisfied with our imprudence in resolving: if what we resolved upon was proper and worthy, to depart from it forces us to despise ourselves for our fickleness and inconstancy; and pierces us with a mortifying consciousness, that our weakness renders us contemptible in the eyes of the world. If you know a person whose character in common life is, that he seldom understands his own mind, that he alters his intention almost every hour, that he never keeps one purpose so long as to have time to execute it, that he resolves and promises, but quickly changes sides; that he cannot be depended upon in any business of moment; you know likewise that it is far from an estimable character, that it is universally despicable, that it is incompatible with every degree of a manly spirit. To carry this wavering and unsteadiness into religion, is far more censurable. The importance of religion and the baseness of living in the violation of its laws, prevent the breach of religious resolution from being regarded as a contemptible imbecility; they render it a detestable crime. To *depart from evil, and do good* *, is the

* Psal. xxiv. 14.

proper

proper business of man. To resolve upon it, is our highest wisdom; it is necessary to our present peace and to our future happiness. In proportion to its importance, is the baseness and the ignominy of inconstancy in pursuing this course after we have resolved upon it. Having decreed the only path of life, having determined to walk in it, can any levity be so degrading, can any irresolution be so disgraceful, as to be allured by trifling pleasures or advantages, or prevailed upon by momentary pains, to desert this path, and to persist in wandering from it, though we meet disquiet and disappointment at every step, and know that without a speedy return, the end must be everlasting death? *After vows* of such high importance, of so interesting tendency, *it is a snare*, it is full of danger *to make enquiry* *, once to admit the thought of retracting them. Can you know yourselves guilty of it, without confusion and self-abhorrence? Can you be guilty of it, and not feel yourselves justly abominable in the sight of God? *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools* †. By thus laying us under an obligation, the violation of which must produce a mortifying sense of baseness and demerit, virtuous resolutions cannot fail to promote steady perseverance in virtue.

* Prov. xx. 25.

† Eccles. v. 4.

A VIRTUOUS resolution impels us to virtue, by rendering it an *object* and *aim* to us. Let a pursuit be no wise interesting in itself, yet when we have determined to engage in it, we are no longer indifferent: this very determination is sufficient to impress it upon us as an end which we must now attain. Religion is supremely interesting to every human creature, though he should never resolve to practise it. But giddiness or the avocations of worldly care hinder many from thinking of it as their concern, as a business with which they ought to charge themselves. Inattention to our concern in the practice of religion, is the most general cause of the neglect of it. Against that inattention, the most direct and efficacious antidote is a serious, deliberate, firm resolution that religion shall be the business of our lives. This sets it in our eye, as what must be practised, as what must not be on any account neglected, as the center in which all our thoughts, and views, and exertions must ultimately terminate: this gives the whole soul a prevailing and habitual bias to it, and predisposes us to resist every temptation to vice, and to embrace every opportunity for virtue. Of these native consequences of a fixt determination, David gives many bright delineations from his own experience. *I have sworn that I will keep thy righteous judg-*

I have sworn

E c

ments:

ments: therefore I will perform it: my soul is continually in my hand, yet do I not forget thy law; the wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts: thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end||. I have chosen the way of truth: What was the effect? Thy judgments have I laid before me, as the model of my whole conduct; I have stuck unto thy testimonies; I will run the way of thy commandments†. Such are the genuine sentiments and workings of a soul under the power of a strong purpose of universal holiness. It is natural for those who have never resolved on virtuous practice, to waver between good and evil. But a firm resolution fixes the will in the choice of good; and as long as it is thus fixt, how can our actions, which are the immediate effects of the exertion of the will, be evil? Till the resolution is decayed or forgotten, we cannot give full consent to any vice: it will be not only a constant monitor of our obligation to adhere steadfastly to virtue, but likewise a constant incitement to fulfil the obligation, and a counterpoise to the power of sin. Temptations solicit in the same manner as formerly; depraved appetites and passions crave their

|| Ps. cxix. 109, 110, 111, 112. † Ver. 30, 31, 32.

wonted indulgence: but they find a strong resistance to their impulse; they find the will determined on the contrary course; they find the soul bent to perseverance in it: before they can prevail, they must conquer this resistance; and before they can conquer it, resolution must have lost its force. The man who remains deeply impressed with his resolution to obey all God's laws, whenever he feels himself in danger of a transgression, readily checks himself by recollecting, that it is inconsistent with the conduct which he has resolved to pursue. To every effort of irregular inclination, he can oppose the firm determination of the will; to every temptation to sin, he is prepared to answer, I am resolved against it. Can it fail to be a great advantage, to have the heart thus steadily turned to virtue, and set upon the practice of it? In resolutions regarding common life, the advantage is universally acknowledged and experienced. We scruple not to dissuade a man from many things which he *designs*; but when we know that he is absolutely *determined* on any point, we confess it to be in vain to endeavour to dissuade him. And why should not resolutions in religion have equal influence? Only because we are not careful to render them equally *firm*.

FROM the habitual bent to virtue, as its object and its aim, which an explicit resolution of pursuing it impresses on the soul, there arises another great advantage. If it were possible that a man should employ himself in virtuous actions without any previous resolution of being virtuous, yet these actions could improve only the particular virtue of which they were immediate exertions. Acts of abstinence would improve the habit of temperance, but could add no strength to the habits of justice, benevolence, and piety: acts of justice or of charity would promote a just or charitable spirit, but could contribute nothing towards forming the other parts of a holy temper. His progress would resemble the imperfect operations of human art, in which only one member of the work is shaped or polished at once, the other members remaining, in the mean time, rude and without form: while he were intent on improving one of the virtues of a good character, he could make no improvement in any of the other virtues. But when a firm resolution has devoted us to the practice of universal holiness, it gives the soul a fixt bias and permanent propensity to every part of holiness: we apply ourselves to every duty which there is an opportunity of performing, as a branch of the general plan which we have determined to execute; and in consequence of this,

this, by performing it, we carry forward that whole plan. Every good action undertaken in accomplishment of a resolution of universal holiness, whatever be the particular nature of that action, strengthens the resolution, confirms the general bias resulting from it, and by doing so, renders us better disposed, not only to the virtue from which it directly proceeds, but to all the virtues which come within the compass of our resolution. We advance in the improvement of our hearts, in a manner similar to the perfect operation of God, who in every one of his works forms the rudiments of all the parts at once, and by one process extending its influence to them all, rears them together to perfection: firmly resolved to do whatever we know to be our duty, we acquire the beginnings of all the virtues at once; by every good action of our lives, we raise them all to a greater degree of vigour; we are secure against the danger of resting satisfied with partial goodness.

Thus, a resolution of holiness sincerely formed and carefully preserved, has great power to render us holy, by fixing holiness as an end which we must pursue, by presenting it to our view as our proper business, by predisposing the mind alike to all the parts of it,

E. e. 3

and

and by rendering the exertions of every virtue the means of cultivating universal goodness.

3. A VIRTUOUS resolution contributes to our practising virtue, by rendering the practice of it *agreeable* to us. This is the natural consequence of that habitual bias which resolution impresses on the soul. Many things, no-wise painful in themselves, become disagreeable to us merely because we undertake them with reluctance, because they run counter to our present bent and inclination. The very same things will be accomplished with ease, and even prosecuted with pleasure at another time, when they are undertaken of choice, and coincide with inclination. A resolution renders that our choice which is necessary for fulfilling it, removes our backwardness to engage in it, prevents the uneasiness which this backwardness would occasion in performing it, and makes it to fall in with the prevailing propensity of the soul. In common life a thousand things appear impracticable when we first think of them, which nevertheless we execute with facility as soon as a firm resolution has set our hearts upon them. A determined mind can support the hardest labour and surmount the greatest difficulties with alacrity and satisfaction. Irregular inclinations and corrupt affections render

der us averse to the restraints which religion imposes on them: we engage in it with reluctance; and therefore every step is difficult and unpleasant. A hearty resolution, if it cannot destroy our reluctance, provides a counterbalance to it: it determines our fixt choice to holiness; it makes us habitually solicitous to become holy; it renders us intent on practising it: we enter into it with spirit; we exert ourselves with vigour; and we feel pleasure in the exertion. When a temptation occurs, it excites the vicious passion to which it is addressed; this passion produces an aversion to the virtue which opposes it: but the general determination to all virtue, which resolution has impressed, combats this aversion, reconciles us to the restraint of inclination, renders it an *easy yoke* *, to which we submit with cheerfulness, and which we persist in bearing with alacrity and joy. David had resolved, *I will keep thy statutes* †. What was the effect? *With my whole heart have I sought thee. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word* ‡. He had said, *I am thy servant* §. The consequence was, *therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold.*

* Mat. xi. 30. † Ps. cxix. 3. ‡ Ver. 19. 14. 16. § Ver. 125.

Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way ||. What we hate, we shall willingly employ care to shun; what we love, we shall joyfully take pains to obtain.

4. A VIRTUOUS resolution has great influence on our improvement, by putting us on the diligent use of all the *means* necessary for fulfilling the resolution. We should reckon it labour lost, to bestow a thought on the means of acquiring what we have no intention to pursue. It may be very valuable: but we have never proposed it to ourselves as an end; to what purpose then enquire, how it may be attained? But as soon as we have determined on the end, our thought is naturally turned to the proper means of promoting it. The end is so intimately connected with the means subservient to it, that, while that continues in our view, no effort is strong enough to prevent all attention to these: it renders us eagerly inquisitive about them; it suggests them to our notice; it forces us to dwell upon them; it makes us forward to apply them; and preserves us active and indefatigable in the application of them. Such being the acknowledged tendency of a fixt resolution,

the resolution of virtue cannot fail to direct our solicitous concern to the means of becoming virtuous: *wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way* * ? is the question which it impelled David to propose with earnestness; and it will lead every man who has formed it with equal sincerity, often to propose the same question to himself with the like earnestness, and to enforce his attention to it with the greatest care. The means of holiness, it is not difficult to discover; they are clearly revealed to us: careful study of the divine law, fervent prayer for the divine assistance, circumspect vigilance against evil, unwearied diligence in every good action which opportunity permits; these are the direct and immediate instruments of virtuous improvement. That a virtuous resolution instigates to the use of these, almost every man may be convinced from his own experience; for there is scarcely any man who has never formed one good resolution. Recollect then: for some little time after you had formed it, did you not feel some disposition to attend to what you ought to do in order to fulfil it, to implore the grace of God for your assistance in keeping it, to be upon your guard against what tempted you to the violation of it, to exert yourselves in some virtuous actions for which your situation gave an opportunity? Perhaps the disposition was

* Psal. cxix. 9.

of short continuance; with the generality it is, alas, of very short continuance: but if it lasted only for a day, it is sufficient for ascertaining the natural tendency and the proper influence of virtuous resolution. But if this be its genuine tendency, what reason can be assigned, why you are not always in this good disposition, but that you suffer your resolutions to wear off and lose their power? Did you, by frequently renewing them, preserve them in undecayed vigour, they would operate continually in the same manner, and with equal efficacy. It is plain from the experience of the saints. David never recollects his holy purposes, or thinks of the subject of them, but they prompt him to use some of the means of holiness. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently: O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes *! I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly. O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee †.—I have said, that I would keep thy words. I entreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments ‡.—Depart*

* Psal. cxix. 4, 5. † Ver. 8, 10, 11. ‡ Ver. 57---60.

from me, ye evil-doers ; for I will keep the commandments of my God.—I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue : that I might guard against temptation, I was dumb with silence, I held my peace†.*

V. FINALLY, Virtuous resolution instigates us to virtue, by suggesting the *motives* to it, keeping them in our view, and fixing our attention on them. When a man is once determined, he not only represents to himself in the strongest light, all the reasons which moved him to determine, but is at pains to search out reasons for adhering to his resolution, which never occurred to him when he was forming it. He will not be diverted from the execution of it, by much stronger arguments than would have been sufficient to prevent his entering into it. He is ingenious in finding topics to justify it ; he is anxious to confute every objection against his persisting in it ; and, if the resolution happen to be improper, he will often satisfy himself with the poorest sophisms and the silliest evasions, rather than abandon it. What effect is then so great as not to be justly expected from a settled resolution to practise holiness ? While it remains in force, it will lead us to meditate often

* Ps. cxix. 113.

† Ps. xxxix. 1, 2.

upon all the motives to holiness; it will keep them perpetually in our view. But they cannot be perpetually in our view, without exciting us to perpetual diligence in holiness. They are so weighty and of such eternal consequence, that nothing but inattention to them can prevent their governing the world. They are derived from every topic which can interest us; they are addressed to every principle which can actuate us. Duty, honour, utility; enjoyment in life, and comfort in the hour of death; present peace, and eternal happiness; conscience, gratitude, hope, and fear; all conspire in urging us to holiness. Before their combined force all the most specious pleas of vice must vanish. In this one psalm, in what profusion are they suggested? in what striking lights are they placed? with what force, and with what efficacy does David inculcate them upon himself? I remind you only of a few examples: *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. They also do no iniquity. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. The law of thy mouth is better unto me, than thousands of gold and silver. All thy commandments are faithful. Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.* They

They are ever with me. Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, are righteous, and very faithful. Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Thy commandments are my delights. Thou hast founded them for ever. Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them. Lord, I hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments. By rendering such views of virtue familiar, by keeping them continually present to the mind, a resolution, if it be but vigorous and steady, must urge us to virtue, with a force almost irresistible.

Thus I have endeavoured to describe the power of virtuous resolutions, and to point out the sources from which it is derived: by producing an obligation which we must fulfil in order to avoid the humiliating sense of inconsistency of character: by fixing holiness as an end which we must pursue, and impressing an habitual bias to it: by conquering our reluctance to the practice of it, and rendering it agreeable: by prompting us to the diligent use of all means of improvement in it: and

* Psal. cxix. 1. 3. 6. 72. 86. 92. 93. 98. 129. 138. 140. 142. 152. 153. 155. 156.

by forcing all the strongest incitements to it, continually into our thoughts: they turn the heart to holiness, collect all the strength of the soul in this one design, and instigate, support, assist, and invigorate all its efforts to accomplish it. The practical improvement of this subject is obvious.

1. SINCE virtuous resolutions are such powerful instruments of virtuous practice and improvement, we ought to form them with the greatest sincerity, firmness, and care. The neglect of this is one of the principal causes of the corruption of the world. Men go on in wickedness because have they never resolved to abandon it: they are at no pains to be virtuous because they have never seriously thought of it. For a man's living in sin, it is not necessary that he make a formal choice of it: it is enough that he has not resolved against it; the strength of temptation and the power of corrupt passions will precipitate him into it. But for our practising holiness, for our persisting in it, notwithstanding all its difficulties, notwithstanding the depressions of infirmity, the impulse of corruption, and the allurements of temptation, it is indispensibly necessary that we devote ourselves to it, and engage ourselves in it, by a fixed choice and resolution. This is the point from which steady virtue always takes

takes its rise. In those who are recovered to virtue after some time spent in open vice, the resolution to change their course must be very deliberate, formal, and explicit. But even when men have, by the blessing of God on a religious education, been earliest and most imperceptibly initiated into virtue, their virtue is owing to a real choice of it, instilled from the first, and habitually preserved and acted upon. If our best resolutions cannot secure perfect purity and immoveable constancy, shall we conclude that resolution has no power? The conclusion would contradict the plainest experience of human life. We should conclude only, that our religious resolutions are too feeble, that the difficulties of religion, and the weakness and corrupt propensities of man, require their being formed with the greatest seriousness, and raised to the greatest vigour, and maintained in unexhausted force. If our goodness be defective, if our sins be many, notwithstanding all our pains to enter into, and to inculcate upon ourselves resolutions of universal holiness, we must have been void of goodness, and profligate in sin, if we had never made one resolution to the contrary. It were folly not to avail ourselves of the great advantages which resolution gives for uniform and steadfast virtue. If it be undertaken early, it will prevent a great deal of corruption, and labour,

labour, and remorse, and misery ; it will spread the happiest influence over all the periods of life. When we are capable of chusing our occupation for this world, it is high time that we make the more important choice of our occupation for the other world. If we are designed for eternity, and if without virtue it is impossible to be happy in eternity, we cannot too speedily, or with too great deliberation and seriousness, devote ourselves to the pursuit of all that is *true*, and *venerable*, and *just*, and *pure*, and *lovely* *. This is the plan and model of life, which every man ought to prescribe to himself, which he should be determined to observe and execute, alone and in company, in prosperity and adversity, in every possible situation. Christianity demands it from all its professors. It requires it to be done in a manner the fittest for adding to its efficacy. It has instituted two sacraments for the purpose. It has enforced the frequent observance of one of them, by making it the subject of Christ's dying precept. It has provided, that as many as have not cast off all regard to the voice of their expiring Saviour, shall form and often renew the firm resolution of universal holiness, with the utmost deliberation and solemnity ; with their souls for a considerable time kept intensely bent upon it ; with a bright

* Phil. iv. 8.

display,

display, full in their view, of every motive to the exact fulfilment of it; with their faith and honour, for the execution, plighted to their fellow-christians; in a striking act of immediate worship, which gives it all the authority and energy of a religious vow, and is appointed, and therefore, a powerful means, of drawing down abundant showers of celestial grace, to nourish and invigorate it, and to raise from it the precious fruits of righteousness.

2. HAVING sincerely resolved to practise universal holiness, let us diligently and faithfully fulfil the resolution. From the power of resolution this may reasonably be expected. We daily find men unalterably constant in resolutions of small importance. We find them inflexibly obstinate in evil purposes. Strange that we should be irresolute only in that in which it is of supreme importance to be resolute and unmoveable! that in religion alone we suffer the force of resolution to be subdued by every foe! By allowing it to languish without producing its effect, by neglecting to act upon it, by fainting in the accomplishment of it, we frustrate one of the most powerful instruments which religion contains for the reformation of our lives and the improvement of our hearts; and we render ourselves in a great measure incapable of being profited by any of

the rest. Excellent as it is, it is but a means of holiness; it derives all its value from its subservience to this end; it is labour lost if it fail of promoting it. It is only for the sake of the execution, that the formation of holy purposes is enjoined. God will not accept of purposes instead of practice; he will not be satisfied with inefficient promises. His voice is, *Vow and pay unto the Lord your God**. True holiness is a stable and permanent temper, a continued and persevering practice. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed †. But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him ‡. Look to yourselves, therefore, that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward ||.*

3. FROM what hath been said, we may learn to judge, whether or not our virtuous resolutions be properly formed, and properly maintained. You see what effects they ought to produce. They promote not our sanctification by an instantaneous charm; from every lapse, you have not reason to suspect either their sincerity or their permanence. If they fortify your sense of obligation; if they keep you habitually attached to holiness as the one

* Psal. lxxvii. 11. † John viii. 31. ‡ Heb. x. 38. || 2 John 8.

thing needful *; if they strenuously resist the corrupt propensities of the soul; if they prompt you to use the means of improvement with uniform diligence; if they render you forward to recollect and to dwell upon the motives to virtue; they have not been formed in vain. These are the energies by which they gradually and slowly mould the heart to holiness. Continue to cherish them, and by the same energies they will at last render you complete. But whenever they cease to produce these effects, they cease to act, they cease to be remembered. You must form anew; you must urge them upon your souls with greater vigour; you must excite yourselves with greater earnestness, to yield to their influence, and to fulfil them. *Be not weary in well-doing* †. *Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown* ‡.

* Luke x. 42.

† 2 Thess. iii. 13.

‡ Rev. iii. 11.

they would; if they themselves were the corrupt proprietors of the soul; if they brought you to the mass of improvement with uniform diligence; if they render you forward to recollect and to dwell upon the motives to virtue; they have not been forward in vain. These are the energies which the heavenly and slowly mould the heart to holiness. Come to cherish them, and by the time they will be left under you complete. But whenever they cease to produce their effects, they cease to act, they cease to be remembered. You must form anew; you must urge them upon your souls with greater vigor; you must excite yourselves with greater earnestness, to yield to their influence, and to fulfil them. Be not weary in well-doing. Hold that fast which you have, that no man take thy crown.

Take ye heed, ye who are called to this service, that ye do not grow weary in well-doing. Be not weary in well-doing. Hold that fast which you have, that no man take thy crown.

SERMON

S E R M O N XIX.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING MORE IMPROVING THAN THE HOUSE OF FEASTING.

ECCLES. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting.

ALL the varieties that can occur in human life, fall under two general heads, prosperity and adversity. Some spend the greatest part of their time in one of these states, and some in the other; but every man has experience of both. Both may be improved so as to promote the great end of life, our education for eternity; for each inculcates peculiar lessons, and puts us upon congruous exercises, which tend to form our hearts to virtue, and to produce such habits as may prepare us for the enjoyment of pure and perfect happiness. But adversity has been always found the more successful teacher of the two. Its discipline is indeed severe: desirous of pre-

sent ease, we naturally fly from it; and when it overtakes us, we use every endeavour to escape from its grasp as soon as possible. Its instructions are, however, so important, that the person who estimates them justly, will reckon its future salutary effects sufficient motives to patience and resignation under the present evil.

IF nevertheless a method could be discovered, by which we might obtain the benefits of adversity without being subjected to its pains; a method by which the prosperous, without relinquishing their prosperity, might learn to steer their course through life, with that sedateness which results from afflictions well improved; who would be so inconsiderate, so indifferent to his own greatest good, as not eagerly to embrace it? Who would not rejoice in the opportunity of becoming wise and virtuous at so cheap a rate? Yet this very opportunity is every day presented to men, and every day neglected by them. Observation of the afflictions of others, has the same tendency with experience of our own. So much is our nature formed for social connections, that the condition of others becomes in some degree our own, and fills our hearts either with sympathetic joy, or with compassionate grief. The happiest of mankind may, as often as they please, contemplate the calamities of their neigh-

neighbours; and from the well directed contemplation of them derive almost the same advantages as from bearing calamity themselves. But the very causes which render us unwilling to be ourselves afflicted, often prevent our fixing our attention on the afflictions of other men: they depress our spirits, they excite uneasy feelings, they occasion present dissatisfaction. The sorrow indeed, which they produce, is not pure or unallayed; by the wise and gracious constitution of human nature, there is an attraction in distress, which engaging our benevolence, draws us towards those who labour under it, even when we can only commiserate, but have it not in our power to bring them relief: yet scenes of gaiety have often force enough to divert us from hearkening to this propensity; their fascination overcomes the attraction of distress: they elevate our hearts, they dilate them with chearful sensations, they introduce a train of pleasant emotions, they give present satisfaction; and therefore we think it more eligible to witness them, to associate with such as revel in them, than to converse with the children of sorrow, and to fix a steady eye upon the calamities of human life. When these compel us to behold them, when their striking circumstances, or our own relation to the persons whom they have befallen, irresistibly arrest

our notice, we too often view them but instinctively; we gaze upon them, and shed a tear; but we indulge none of those useful reflections which would have a permanent influence upon our temper and our conduct. If such reflections happen to arise spontaneously, we quickly banish them as intruders; we shrink back from the seriousness which they would introduce, and seek relief in mirth and dissipation. This is to prefer the satisfaction of the present moment to the lasting improvement of the heart. It may be more agreeable to view the glitter of prosperity, and to partake in the laughter and levity of the prosperous; but it is incomparably more useful to enter into the sorrows of the afflicted, to ponder the evils of life, and to pursue the thoughts which a serious view of them inspires. This is the judgment which the wise man pronounces in my text: *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting*: for that he means, considering the distresses of others, not enduring our own, is evident from what he adds, *For that is the end of all men, and the strong will lay it to his heart*. He has particularly in his eye the last evil incident to man: he points at the benefit that the living may derive from meditation on the instances of mortality which surround them, and in which affection often gives them a melancholy interest;

terest; but we need not suppose that he excludes the benefit which wise spectators may receive from considering other evils, in which likewise they are concerned only by sympathy with the sufferers.

SOLOMON was deeply skilled in human life, he was acquainted with all the circumstances by which it is diversified, he understood the nature and the tendency of all the events which fill it up; and he had learned to measure the usefulness of things, not by their fitness to gratify inclination, or to give immediate pleasure, but by their efficacy in forming the heart, and promoting spiritual improvement. On this principle it is, that his wisdom, guided by God's unerring Spirit, declares, *That to go to the house of mourning, to be willingly and familiarly conversant with scenes of sorrow and suffering, is better than to go to the house of feasting, to be engrossed by objects of festivity, jollity, pomp, or splendour. To the gayer part of mankind, to those in every station who give a loose to levity and thoughtlessness, this maxim will doubtless seem a paradox; but it is a truth of the most unquestionable certainty, and the most capital importance. It is better, because it is more useful; and it is more useful, because it is likely to have a more beneficial influence on our*
temper

temper and our conduct; because it is more conducive to our religious and moral culture, and our real happiness. That in this decisive point of view, *the house of mourning* is preferable to *the house of feasting*, I undertake to evince, by a comparison of both, in respect of the general temper and disposition which they form, in respect of the sentiments which they suggest, and in respect of the affections which they draw out into exercise, and render habitual.

FIRST, As to the general temper which they form: *to go to the house of feasting*, tends to produce levity and dissipation; but *to go to the house of mourning*, fixes the soul in a temper of sedateness, seriousness, and composure.

A VERY little recollection will convince you, that a run of good success, a train of gay avocations, or a course of amusements, seldom fail to render men, in some degree, light and volatile, thoughtless and unreflecting. They leave neither inclination nor capacity for the labours which attend a close application to any subject. They benumb the understanding, enervate the affections, relax all the powers of the soul, and throw it into an insignificant flutter. The jollity which scenes of festivity excite, is of a dissolving, debilitating

tating nature. It is a swelling, rather than an elevation of heart. It is a fever, not a brisk and healthful circulation. It is apter to divert us from virtuous offices altogether, than to render us chearful and active in performing them. Intoxicated with it, we are too giddy to be able to ponder the moment of our actions; too much off our guard to elude the deceitfulness of sin, and the insinuations of temptation; too inconsiderate for embracing opportunities of doing good; and too effeminate for exerting ourselves in order to improve them. *I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it *?* It yields no manly enjoyment, and it unfits us for virtue and religion. The improvident, unthinking temper which it fosters, is one of the principal causes of those vices which have over-run the world. It is only in the sedate and recollected soul, that virtue can flourish and grow up to vigour and maturity.

THIS is the very character which attention to distress is directly calculated to form. Distress is indeed a gloomy object. When the unprincipled or the ungoverned mind first enters into the contemplation of it, it may be sunk into melancholy, raised into violent agi-

* Eccl. ii. 2.

tations of grief, or broken into peevishness and discontent, very unfriendly to virtue, as opposite to its benign exertions, as even the profusest mirth and levity can be to the solemnity of its duties. But if the soul be at all prepared for meeting the shocks of sorrow, familiarity with the sufferings of the afflicted will produce no more than a moderate concern, a necessary degree of seriousness. It will not lift up the passions into tempestuous billows; it will only collect them into sobriety of mind. A proper sense of the calamities incident to man swallows up all trivial emotions, and occupies the whole soul with one important feeling. It becomes recollected in itself; it acquires an attentive frame; it is well disposed to caution, circumspection, and consideration. It is this happy temper that attunes the heart to virtue. The man in whom it prevails, is always solicitous to act aright, and always capable of acting aright. He is fit for self-government, steadiness, and consistency of conduct. He has a defence against every temptation to sin; for he is enough master of himself to perceive its tendency, and to detect its insignificance. He can calmly examine the value of every object, and canvas the claim of every vice. In vain does fancy throw a false colouring over it; he is proof against the deceit; his reason is awake to discern

cern the artificial varnish, and his conscience is active to raise a detestation of its natural deformity. He is prepared for despising all those slight allurements which seduce the thoughtless from the diligent practice of holiness, and from persevering efforts to reach the perfection of their nature.

SUCH is the general temper to which we shall be formed by going to *the house of mourning*: and when we consider this temper as fundamental to religion, as essential to purity, blamelessness, constancy, and uniformity of character; this alone is sufficient to constrain us, however much inclination may oppose the concession, in our judgment, in our conscience to acknowledge that it is far better to visit the comfortless abodes of poverty and pain, of disease and death, forbidding as they seem to be; than to frequent places of the gayest entertainment, the loudest mirth, or the most inviting and agreeable amusements. *The heart, the delight, of the wise is the house of mourning*; and that only *of fools in the house of mirth**.

SECONDLY, *To go to the house of mourning, is better than to go to the house of feasting, in*

* Eccl. vii. 4.

respect of the sentiments which it suggests. The latter diverts us from meditation on any subjects of a serious or important nature ; the former forces into our view the most important, the most deeply interesting subjects.

GAIETY does not penetrate the heart so deeply as concern ; but it in some sense engrosses it more entirely. It in a great measure lulls the thinking powers asleep, suspends the exercise of thought, and unhinges the train of our ideas. It breaks the bands by which our present perceptions draw others into our view. It annihilates the gale which carries us forward, in a regular direction from sentiment to sentiment. The mind is like a ship becalmed, incapable of motion ; or it is the sport of light and unsteady breezes shifting every moment from point to point ; it can make no progress, it can only roll in its present place ; it cannot advance in any course of regular meditation. Gay ideas can introduce none but gay ideas. Their agreeable titillation indisposes us for every thought except what regards the enjoyment of the present, or the anticipation of a future amusement. All those religious principles which can either restrain from vice or instigate to virtue, studiously avoid the circles of levity and dissipation : if they should happen to enter into them, they would be received
with

with coldness, or turned out as impertinent intruders.

BUT all that we meet with in *the house of mourning*, naturally suggests many of the most important ideas; and the sadness of heart which it inspires prepares us for feeling all their force. The contemplation of distress not only inclines us to attention, but calls up the most useful objects on which we can bestow our attention. It almost constrains us to recollect and to ponder some of those awful truths, and awakening considerations, which are the strongest motives to the right discharge of every duty. When we enter by sympathy, into the sorrows of others, though the heart embraces the painful sensation which they have produced, and enjoys a sweet satisfaction in it, yet it avoids clinging too closely to it. It runs spontaneously into such views as may relieve or vary its uneasiness without extinguishing the soft emotion in which it is involved. Both our present disposition and the objects which engage our notice, lead us naturally into such tracks of thinking as are analogous and congruous to seriousness, and concern. It is only from such that we can find relief. Should gay ideas be accidentally forced upon us, instead of mitigating our sorrow, they would imbitter it; their continu-

ance

ance would render it insupportable ; we should run eagerly into graver reflections as the only means of alleviating it. Sorrow creates a sort of appetite for pain ; it causes us to reject cheerfulness with loathing and disgust. It delights in being indulged ; it is more effectually soothed by the serious thoughts to which we are prompted by itself ; and for this reason it determines us to dwell upon them. There is not a single species of distress in which we can observe our fellow-men, our neighbours or our friends, that does not naturally lead us to useful meditations. I can give but a very few examples.

WHEN you cast your eyes upon the poor, when you visit the haunts of indigence,—and how can you avoid it, if you do not obdurately refuse to look upon them?—for they abound in every street, they meet you at every corner ;—you must be totally lost to sensibility of heart, if some profitable thoughts, concerning their condition, concerning your own, concerning the ways of God, do not rise in your minds. Who has made so great a difference between that tattered beggar and thyself? Canst thou justly claim as great a superiority in worth, as in prosperity? Why then art thou thus distinguished? The rules by which God dispenses penury and abundance,

and, pain and pleasure, seem to be unequal; their principles are wholly undiscoverable by the weakness of our powers: but if he be wise and good, thus irregularly distributed, they cannot be for recompence; they must be only for trial. Our concern must be, only to improve them, not to enjoy them: if we acquiesce in enjoying them, we lose them; it is their very nature to *perish with the using* *. Many in their *life time* have received their *good things*; and are afterwards *tormented*; while they who received, *evil things*, are *comforted* †. We are not the proprietors; we are but the stewards of the good things which we possess. To fix our worldly condition belongs to Providence; to behave well, whatever our condition be, and by behaving well to secure a state of everlasting blessedness, is all that can belong to us. If any of you neglect this, ye shall see many whose poverty you despised or pitied, *in the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves thrust out* ‡.

When it is by having been tumbled down from ease and affluence, that your neighbour or your friend is languishing in poverty; the reverse which he has suffered, enforces and multiplies our serious reflections. We feel

* Col. ii. 22. † Luke xvi. 25. ‡ Chap. xiii. 28.

ingly perceive the vanity, the uncertainty, the worthlessness of all temporal things. Is it for a small pittance of these, that so many sacrifice their innocence, pollute their hearts, and wound their consciences? Can it be but the extremity of folly, to transgress any duty for the sake of what may vanish in a moment? Can it really be difficult to acquire that disengagement from them, which will prepare us for devoting ourselves heartily to religion? Shall pride or presumption rise in our prosperity, and idly boast, *my mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved**? If God but *hide his face*, we are troubled*: How awful is his providence? It putteth up, and casteth down, whomsoever it pleaseth: nothing remains for us but to adore it with reverence, and to receive its appointments with submission or with gratitude.

You often see the bed of sickness; you observe, not a stranger, but the neighbour whom you esteem, the friend whom you love, languishing upon it. Is it possible at that time to restrain your thoughts from the most solemn themes? How precarious is human life? How many disorders are incident to this mortal body, the least of which can render every

* Psal. xci. 6, 7. I ↑

enjoyment insipid, and life itself a burden? How little is it worth our while to plod, and sweat, and drudge for what can profit us only in the present world? Impossible that this fleeting, chequered scene can be the whole of man's existence! Hath God *made all men in vain* *? Hath he not formed them for a state of purer and more durable felicity? Is it not a debasing of the dignity of our reasonable powers, to use them only as the instruments of pursuing unsatisfying, unstable, transitory trifles? For extinguishing the heat of a fever, for allaying the anguish of the stone, for slackening the pace of a consumption, how impotent are all the titles, and treasures, and dignities of earth? The interests of the eternal world must be the only object; the virtuous, the holy exercises which are subservient to them, must be the only proper sphere, of an immortal spirit exiled into a body which is liable to so manifold infirmities and distresses. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* †! Far beyond the possibility of being numbered, are the ways in which God can execute his displeasure on those who incur it by their disobedience. *Who knoweth the power of his anger* ‡? If the slight disorders of our present state can render us incapable of satisfac-

* Psal. lxxix. 47. † Heb. x. 31. ‡ Psal. xc. 11.

tion, if they can turn existence into a curse during their continuance; if even the imaginary evils which a disordered fancy presents to view, if the unsubstantial specûres which rise in a moment of delirium, can pierce the heart with real anguish, and overwhelm it with insupportable terrors; what must that *tribulation and anguish* * be, which shall hereafter come upon every soul of man that doth evil *, from enduring that punishment which, for the vindication of his authority and laws, the Almighty will, in the completion of his moral government, inflict on the obstinately and incorrigibly wicked? What creature can bear it? What heart recoils not with horror from the thought of it? Will we venture on any action that can expose us to it? Warned by so many afflictions, distresses, and calamities, which render this world a land of sorrow, though God has caused them to come only for correction, or for mercy †; will we not fly from that distress and anguish, which he will send in indignation, for the perdition of the irreclaimable, a single moment of which can outweigh a combination of all temporal evils? Convinced by what we see around us, of how much misery human nature is susceptible, can we want motives to labour for admission into

† Rom. ii. 9. x. Job xxxviii. 3.

that

2 2 0

that

that happy state, into which no disease, no pain, no disappointment of desire can ever enter, in which *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying* †.

WE every day observe instances of mortality without emotion, without one grave reflection: their frequency has made us callous to all impression from them. But when it is a revered parent, a darling child, or a beloved friend, that has breathed out his last, the most unthinking finds it no longer in his power to remain insensible. Earthly things shrink into nothing: every sublunary enjoyment seems to be annihilated: the whole world is become a dreary waste. Thoughts force themselves upon the giddiest, which, if they were but suffered to be permanent, could not fail to break every undue attachment to the objects of sense, and to fix our whole hearts on things spiritual and eternal.

By being witnesses of distress, thinking persons must be put upon reflections of this kind: and when their tendency is so salutary, will we not, in contempt of present gratification, confess that *it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting* ?

† Rev. xxi. 4.

THIRDLY, It is likewise better, in respect of the affections which it cherishes. *To go to the house of feasting* gives exercise to almost no good affections; but *to go to the house of mourning* draws forth into exercise, and by exercising improves, those affections which constitute the sum of virtue. *Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better* *.

It is only by being exerted, that good affections can become habitual. What gives no scope to their exertion, can contribute nothing to form them into a settled temper. A succession of gaieties and amusements can strengthen scarcely any disposition in our nature, but levity and the love of trifles; for it gives exercise to no other. If it appears to be the cement of society, and the bond of good-will and friendship, the appearance, alas, is generally deceitful: under this fair pretence, it often fosters only pride, vanity, and ostentation on the one hand, and flattery, false professions, and mean compliances on the other hand. The dissipated, jovial companion seldom excels either in the sensibility, or in the activity of benevolence.

* Eccl. vii. 3.

BUT a feeling attention to the distresses of human life, incident to ourselves, and lying heavy on some of those who are connected with us, naturally cherishes many of the most important virtues. A suffering friend sometimes exhibits an attractive example of patience, magnanimity, and resignation, *seeking unto God, and unto God committing his cause* *. His conduct expresses in the most striking manner, the pious sentiments of Job, *shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil †? Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: he also shall be my salvation ‡.* Amidst the heaviest afflictions belonging to this mortal state, he retains fervent piety to the God who severely, yet mercifully, corrects him. Unengrossed by all that he endures, he continues interested in the concerns of his friends, warm in his love to them, and his solicitude for their welfare; like to the Saviour of mankind, who throughout the agonies of his passion, preserved an ardent zeal, and expressed earnest desires, for the good of the human race. Such behaviour under the mighty hand of God commands the veneration of the heart, and urges us to collect the whole vigour of our souls that we may become capable of imitating it.

* Job v. 3.

† Chap. ii. 10.

‡ Chap. xiii. 15, 16.

IF, on the other hand, we see one of our fellow-creatures fainting under his distresses, unable to sustain them with Christian fortitude, we may improve his misbehaviour for our own instruction. It is not difficult to discover the causes of his weakness. . . We behold exemplified in him, the ill consequences of the neglect of self-government; the painful effects of immoderate attachment to worldly pleasures or possessions; the misery which springs from the want of faith and confidence in God; or the enfeebling, dejecting influence of conscious guilt. And by the alarming exemplification, we are loudly warned, before adversity shall overtake ourselves, to alter our conduct, to reform our temper, to root out from our hearts whatever can increase its bitterness.

BUT whatever be the behaviour of those whose afflictions we contemplate, the very contemplation of the afflictions themselves has a powerful tendency to improve us in benevolence, piety, resignation, patience. Distress sets any of our fellow-creatures in a very interesting point of view. It demands for him a peculiar degree of love and tenderness; *to him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend**: with a voice of persuasion irresistible.

* Job vi. 14.

† Chap. ii. 12.

* Job v. 2.

ble to the sensibility of every heart that is not totally depraved, his affliction crieth, *have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me* †. While the distress of others grieves us, it attaches us to them by a strong affection. It forces upon our recollection every circumstance in their former situations, or in their characters, that can confirm or enliven our affection. We forget, or find out excuses for those faults in their behaviour which once provoked our anger or our indignation. Our whole souls are melted into complacence and benevolence. By being often in this manner awakened, and exerted in the softest feelings, the kind affections are prepared for rising and actuating us on less moving occasions. The heart is trained to love, fitted for being touched by every agreeable quality and every endearing relation, and disposed to flow out in beneficence, in deeds of charity, and in acts of generosity, as often as opportunities occur. Distress puts it in our power to improve our kind affections, not only by indulging their inward workings, but also by putting them forth into act. We can often assist those who labour under it; we can often extenuate or relieve their sufferings by our advice or by our timely succour; we

† Job xix. 21.

can always give them that consolation which results from the sense of our sympathizing with their pains. By accustoming ourselves thus to give them ease, we shall advance in that brotherly love which of is so great importance in the Christian temper, that our Saviour has made it the distinctive characteristic of his genuine disciples.

CONSIDERATION of the distresses which are common in human life, and which many around us labour under, is no less fit for exciting and improving pious affections to that God who *maketh sore, and bindeth up; who woundeth, and his hands make whole* *. It is prosperity indeed, that contains the strongest reasons for piety. The enjoyments of life render our love and thankfulness most justly due to him *who giveth us richly all things to enjoy* †; they demand our fullest satisfaction in the appointments of his providence, and our most chearful obedience to the dictates of his will. But experience testifies, that we are aptest to be undutiful when we are most indebted. When we are full, we deny God, and say, *who is the Lord* ‡? They who are not in trouble as other men, whose eyes stand out with fatness, who have more than heart

* Job v. 18. † 1 Tim. vi. 17. ‡ Prov. xxx. 9.

could wish, speak loftily, they set their mouth against the heavens, pride compasseth them about as a chain †. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them; they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth: therefore they say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways? what is the Almighty, that we should serve him ‡? When prosperity is so intoxicating, if we enjoy it unimpaired, can we escape its baneful influence, without setting ourselves to ponder the adversities under which others groan? If we saw nothing around us but the glitter of prosperity, we could scarcely fail to lose all sense of God. It is when they fix their eyes on the calamities of which the world is so full, which many of their neighbours feel, and to which they also are obnoxious; that the prosperous are awakened to sobriety of mind, recalled to themselves, and to the acknowledgement of a God, in whose hand is the breath of all mankind *, who taketh away, and none can hinder him, nor say unto him, what dost thou ||. It is this view of things that, from an instrument of corrupting their hearts, converts their ease and affluence into an efficacious means of

† Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6, 8, 9.

‡ Job xxi. 9, 12, 13, 14.

* Chap. xii. 10.

|| Chap. ix. 12.

elevating and enlarging them to run the way of God's commandments §; and to delight themselves in him. It is this view of things, that rouses them to a sense of the sovereign authority of his laws, and of the infinite importance of his love; and impels them to seek his favour above all things, by keeping his precepts with their whole hearts. It is this view of things, that leads those whose *mountain standeth strongest* *, to perceive the necessity of resignation to the Governor of the world, of submission to his uncontrollable dominion, of trust and confidence in the unfathomable wisdom of his providence. Religion is the only asylum of the afflicted; and therefore familiarity with affliction cannot fail to instigate every man of prudence to secure its protection in the day of trouble, by having recourse to it while the candle of the Lord yet shines upon him. You would think your situation dismal, if you found yourselves, your families, and your friends, in a dreary wilderness, without a morsel of bread, without a drop of water, without a guide, without defence or refuge from the wild beasts that howled on every side. You would be inconsolable, if you should awake, with all who are dearest to you, in a leaky vessel, without a pilot, in a tempestuous,

§ Pl. cxix. 32.

* Plal. xxx. 7.

unknown, boundless ocean, the sport of wind and waves. In the moment of safety, you would tremble in the consciousness that there is not security for another moment. To the man who is a stranger to religion, who lives without God, who has no regard to him nor interest in him, this world is a drearier wilderness, and a more tempestuous ocean. Amidst numberless calamities, which he sees every moment raging all around him, and which he has neither power nor prudence to avert from himself, he has no director, no guardian, no hope, no consolation. That man alone is blessed, who can say unto God, *Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand: thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory* †.

CONSIDERATION of adversity tends also to form our hearts to resolution, fortitude, and patience. Prosperity enervates the soul; continued gaiety and dissipation render it too delicate to bear the slightest shock. Experience of adversity most effectually produces hardness, and strength of mind: periods of commotion and distress seldom fail to abound with heroic spirits. To be often conversant with the ob-

† *Psal. lxxxiii. 23, 24.*

jects of distress will contribute to it not a little; it will prepare us for bearing our own troubles, and it will shew us the necessity of strengthening ourselves to bear them. To befall us unexpectedly, doubles the severity of every affliction. By being seriously contemplated beforehand, it is rendered familiar to us, its aspect becomes less formidable, we have time to excite our courage, and to collect all the vigour of our souls for encountering it. If we frequently turn our eyes to the dark side of human life, we cannot avoid discerning that the lot of every man is inevitably chequered with sorrow. By the irreversible sentence of God, the whole creation is *subjected to vanity*†. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance*‡. It is in vain to expect exemption from calamity. All that we can do, is to reconcile ourselves to it as much as possible, to prepare ourselves for bearing it whenever it shall come, and on the foundation of pious resignation, to build up fortitude, that we may not repine at *the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him* ||. That it would be inexcusable to faint, attention to

† Rom. viii. 20.

‡ Eccl. iii. 1, 2, 4.

|| Heb. xii. 5.

the calamities of others is sufficient to convince us : we may see some subjected to heavier calamities than we endure, or have reason to apprehend.

So different, so contrary are the tendencies of *the house of feasting* and *the house of mourning*. The former dissolves the soul in levity, dispels all profitable thoughts, and gives no scope to the exercise of any good affection : the latter composes the mind into seriousness and recollection, suggests the most important and instructive truths, and draws out and improves the noblest virtues. Our duty, therefore, is clear with respect to both.

SINCE the gaieties and the enjoyments of life tend rather to corrupt than to improve the heart, we ought to be very moderate in the indulgence of them. If at any time it appear difficult to fix the precise point where moderation ends, it is much safer to abstain unnecessarily, than to incur a possibility of exceeding. To make mirth, and jollity, and pleasure, and amusement, the business of our lives ; for the sake of them, to neglect the call of any duty ; to bestow on them the hour which we have an inviting opportunity of employing to worthier purposes ; is indisputably to exceed. The most innocent of the kind should be indulged but rarely,

rarely, and for a short time, as necessary relaxations. Despicable is the life that is wasted in thoughtless dissipation and festivity. It is remarked to the dishonour of the rich man mentioned in the gospel, that he *sared sumptuously every day* *. *She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth* †. Life is given us for infinitely more important purposes. To be intoxicated with the love of pleasure; to be unhappy in the want of gay entertainments; by the use of them to contract a disrelish for the business of life and the occupations of religion; to run into such of them as are in the least degree unlawful in their nature; is alike below the dignity, and contrary to the duty of creatures who are reasonable and immortal. But from those who are constantly at ease, it will require the most careful circumspection always to avoid it. It will require such a jealous vigilance over themselves, as Job exercised over his sons: *when the days of their feasting were gone about, he sent and sanctified them, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all*; for Job said, *it may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts* ‡. In seasons of the highest festivity, let us beware of abandoning ourselves to levity: let a sense of God, mixing with our relaxations, preserve them moderate and innocent.

John 10. 1. Luke 12. 19. 1 Tim. 6. 17. † Job 12. 21.

LET our enjoyment of our own prosperity be accompanied by a tender sensibility to the sufferings of others. We are not required to dwell in *the house of mourning*: but in many ways we are called upon to pay it frequent visits. For this very end, compassion is made one of the strongest movements of the human heart. In compassionating distress, we taste a solemn, serious pleasure, deeper and more lasting than all the joys of mirth. We are conscious of a more satisfying complacence in the tear of sympathy, than in the loudest roar of laughter. We enjoy the delightful reflection, that we do some good to those who stand most in need of it. To be unpitied in distress, to be neglected by neighbours, to be forsaken by former friends, strikes a dagger into the wounded heart. It was with anguish of soul that Job exclaimed, *my brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid; what time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place**. When he is parched with the sultry heat of trouble, they refuse him a drop of comfort. Will we decline a fellow-feeling with calamity, when we know that *ourselves* are also in

† Job vi. 15, 16, 17.

the body †, and subject to the like calamities? The being involved in a common danger, is generally a bond of the strictest union. If credit be due to history, the fiercest animals have sometimes laid aside their fierceness, and abstained from their prey, when along with it they were surprized into a situation of imminent distress. Shall a sudden panic tame the savage brute, and shall reflection be unable to inspire man with humanity to man? We are all brethren, exposed to the same perils. The same soothing pity, the same kind attention, which this hour would pour balm into our neighbour's wounds, we ourselves may need the next. Let not the fulness of our own present precarious enjoyment harden our hearts against the cry of poverty or the groan of sickness. When we have light in our own dwellings, let us endeavour to dispel the darkness in which others sit. The greater the peace and ease which prevails at home, the more we are at leisure to regard the disquiets which walk around us. The more abundantly we have received, the more abundantly we ought to impart. But as improving as *the house of mourning* is, it is possible to visit it without advantage. By enuring us to the sight of pain, it may only wear off our sensibility: by

† Heb. xiii. 3,

tempting us to mix our murmurings with the complaints of the afflicted, it may corrupt us into discontent; it may teach us to repine against God's appointment of so imperfect happiness to the inhabitants of earth. It has its own snares, against which, as well as the contrary snares, we must be upon our guard. We must take pains to learn its lessons; we must labour to acquire sobriety of mind; we must encourage serious reflections, and inculcate them upon ourselves; we must exercise ourselves in diligent application to the practice of virtue; and we must pray to God for his assistance in forming us to a right sense of the world, and in directing us to pursue it so as to prepare us for a better world.

Now unto him that is able to make all things to work together for your good, be glory and honour for evermore. Amen.

T H E E N D,

tempting us to mix our manumings with the
 complaints of the afflicted, it may corrupt us
 into discontent; it may teach us to repine
 against God's appointment of so imperfect hap-
 piness to the inhabitants of earth. It hinders
 our thank, against which, as well as the con-
 trary thank, we must be upon our guard. We
 must take pains to learn its lessons; we must
 labour to acquire sobriety of mind; we must
 encourage **OUR RATHER** and incite

Page 38, l. ult. for intention, read intention. P. 62, l. 12, read took,
 l. 22, put a comma after examination. P. 74, l. 2, for of them all, read them
 all. P. 79, l. 24, read worms of; l. 29, for civil, read cil. P. 80, l. 8, del.
 in. P. 91, l. 8, for conduct, read contest. P. 106, l. 12, for them it, read them
 in it. P. 136, l. 27, after Rom. iv. 3, insert Gal. iii. after Gen. del. Gal.
 P. 157, l. 2, read would it not. P. 162, l. 1, for more, read worse. P. 169, l. 4,
 read their folly. P. 232, l. ult. for weakness, read meekness. P. 234, l. 16,
 read their tempers. P. 258, l. 16, for foundation, read fountain. P. 269,
 l. 2, for in a, read in thy. P. 271, l. 2, for to, read in. P. 273, l. 25, for
 greatest, read chief. P. 301, l. 6, read its necessity. P. 304, l. 21, for and,
 read not. P. 305, l. 1, read can practise. P. 309, l. 12, for thoughts, read
 thought. P. 321, l. 2, read only prohibits. P. 370, l. 8, for most, read
 more.

Now unto him that is able to make all
 things to work together for your good,
 be glory and honour for evermore.

Amen.

THE END.

